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Pennfield Ridge

by

Stanlee Obodiac

Author of
"The Hrabia's Syn Sins"



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DEDICATED TO
Course 30 at the operational training
school at Pennfield Ridge
and
the parishioners of St. Gerard's.

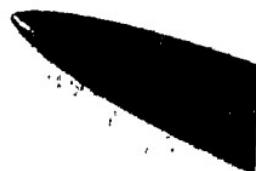
Foreword

This non-fictional story was written during the youthful part of 1944 . . . written then on the eve of journey to the war in Europe . . . written with a pessimistic desperation that if I would not return, my buddies at Pennfield Ridge and the people back home would have something to remember me by.

Obviously I was spared from that which I feared, and dared not present this manuscript, which had been written in such haste . . . but now in 1949, I believe that "that which is, should be."

STAN OBODIAC.

London.



About the Author

Stan Obodiac is a 26-year-old former Flying Officer in the R.C.A.F. Obodiac was educated at St. Joseph's College, Yorkton, Saskatchewan; the Air Force geniuses were his military pedagogues; and he is a graduate of a moral leadership course from Louvain University, Belgium. Currently, he has been self-educated himself in London, reading as omnivorously as Oscar Wilde.

At Pennfield Ridge, where this story was set but wandered to the more lustrous backgrounds of New York City and pretty Nova Scotia, Stan was indoctrined with operational gen. From here he was gradually assimilated into a R.A.F. squadron which flew Bostons.

With 88 Squadron, Obodiac flew 50 operations against enemy strongholds in France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and Germany. He is probably the only pilot in the R.A.F. who rolled a Boston with a full bomb load. Structural failure on one mission had caused his rudder to jam in his elevators, rolling the aircraft and making the air-gunner abandon ship, but Obodiac brought the Douglas product in to his French base by differential throttle control On another occasion he guided three petrol-short American Mustangs, in a blinding rainstorm, back to safety. In England, Obodiac jumped fully clothed into a lake swimming pool to rescue his air-gunner, who had capsized a dinghy and couldn't swim. The heavy shoes presented a swimming difficulty and he almost drowned himself, but he sustained Gagne long enough for his mates to help. With victory in Europe realised, Obodiac joined a communications squadron at Ghent and flew V.I.P.s about Europe.

After the war, Obodiac continued to play all sports to such an extent that it earned him the nickname "Nature Boy." He has many trophies, plaques, awards and presents to show for his achievements in golf, ice-hockey, baseball, softball, basketball, and bowling.

Settling down after the war was a problem, and Obodiac travelled the United States and Canada seeking not even he knew what. Then he joined the staff of radio station CJGX at Yorkton, took a fling at radio announcing, became the sports editor and news announcer. Presently he is in England playing ice-hockey for Wembley Lions, mingling once again with the European atmosphere that he recognises to be essential in the complete education of a young man



Course 30 at Pennfield Ridge

P/O MacArthur, P/O Muir, P/O Baudais, P/O MacEachern, P/O Obudiac, P/O Emsig, P/O Thompson.

Sgt. Stanley, Sgt. Wallace, Sgt. Burton, Sgt. Snyder, Sgt. Thompson

CHAPTER ONE

I WANT to tell you the story of Pennfield Ridge. This is a New Brunswick air station, constructed in the St. John River valley, a region of tremendous rugged beauty. The country environing this district is so rockily uncertain, and so thickly populated with fir, that an English chap who first glimpsed the locality said: "Blimey! If you had to force-land here, I guess you would have had it!" Quickly, an Australian had another passing remark: "Back home, our country is so rough that we invented the jeep twenty-five years before the American did." Then a lad from the Star-Spangled Country, who wasn't going to be out-gagged, threw in: "In the Appalachian region, in good old U.S.A., the country is so wild that golfers are continually in the rough." And so the environs of St. John were discussed, but always Pennfield Ridge was considered as a rocky, out-of-the-way terminal.

The Ridge was an operational training unit, where all members of aircrew would tutoringly receive advance training before going overseas to bomb and ravage Hitler's stronghold. These boys would fly Venturas, a modification of the old, trustworthy Hudson bomber and reconnaissance aircraft. Venturas are built by the Vega Aircraft Corporation, and it was to be hoped that they would inherit the Hudson's nickname, "Old Boomerang," because it always came back. The boys were remarkably gay and jovial, considering that this was to be their final twelve weeks in Canada before proceeding to the aerial front, where bullets

from highly aerobatic Messerschmidts awaited them. "Enjoy your life while you still possess it" was their wartime motto.

On their initial day, they were ushered into a sort of an auditorium, where the Commanding Officer was to speak to them. Everyone jumped to attention when he briskly and domineeringly made his appearance.

You can most certainly read a man's character by the manner in which he enters a room. A man who cautiously prises open a door invariably turns out to be a man who is timid and who is afraid that his presence will be undesirable. This C.O. entered the room brazenly, hurricanied himself in, so the course knew that they were being glanced on by a leader.

He spoke concentratingly, briefly.

"Men! You have an important job to do here." So spoke Group Captain Leach, a man who has seen combat duty in this war, a man who had fought most courageously in the air. He wore a row of decorations under his wings — medals received for highly citated bravery and leadership.

"We are going to prepare you for actual combat duty. You must be keen, you must readily grasp details of flying these Venturas. I know you can all fly well, but here you are going to fly a faster, larger ship. Be on your toes, never relax in your vigilance, because soon you will be facing the enemy. Blast him from the skies and make him die for his country."

That is a condensation of this man's talk. Sincerity flowed with each word, and the class knew that this man was the type that was immortalising the Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

CHAPTER TWO

PENNFIELD RIDGE was overcrowded with students. Everyone in the armed forces has a good sense of rumour! Soon, word was spread around that the new course was going to get an additional fortnight of leave. Plans rapidly circulated . . . some of the class would go to Montreal, others preferred Toronto; some desired the automobile capital, Detroit; but I, and about seven others, dreamed of colossal New York City. We wanted to see blazing Broadway, fashionable Fifth Avenue, the theatres on Times Square and Forty-Second Street, the famous sportorial centres, the perpendicular city itself!

We were overjoyed when those rumours were confirmed. We were actually going to get leave! What a comforting feeling! Hurriedly, our travelling essentials were assembled — shirts, socks, hankies, toilet articles and incidentals that would be used on a short ten-day trip.

The gang ran over to the Y.M.C.A. and I convinced the operator that a special bus should be chartered to transport this overflow crowd to St. John, where all railroad connections could be made. Everyone barged off to get their passes authorised, for the "Y" man had told us that the special bus would be here at 1500 hours (3 o'clock to a civilian).

At 1500 hours the mob plied into the passenger vehicle after purchasing return tickets to Pennfield.

Many of the boys had trained on the prairies of Western Canada, many on the West Coast, many in England, Australia. Now they were all set to travel once more . . . Truly, an airman is a globe-trotter.

CHAPTER THREE

IT was a bus load of happy boys who rode out from Pennfield Ridge. Everyone laughed, joked and kidded each other. The New York crowd started polishing up their Yankee accents, and a lad from that sceptered isle, England, said that Britain and the U.S.A. were two countries separated by the same language.

"You know," wisecracked Russ McDonald, "Pennfield Ridge must be a very important place. When speaking about it, they always say, 'Pennfield Ridge, N.B.'"

We were motoring along the shores of the Bay of Fundy when Bob Durante asked: "Do the fellows who look after these lighthouses cook their own meals?"

"Hey, fellows! Get set for one of those remarks of a genius. Okay, why?" I questioned.

Bob could scarcely control himself when he blustered forth with: "Well, they are lighthouse keepers, aren't they?"

After that pun the gang started getting witty, so I sat leisurely back in the cushioned seat and admired the scenery, because the St. John River valley was very beautiful. After getting flying glimpses of southern Saskatchewan, I decided that reforestration wasn't necessary in New Brunswick yet. This road curved considerably; it wended its way up and over the hilly countryside, and from these extreme points you could view the Bay excellently.

"Look at those ice cakes!" I shouted, being tremendously impressed.

Bay of Fundy tides are world famous for the terrific heights to which they rise. These "ice cakes" that had so engrossed my attention were merely rocks that virtually had gigantic sheets of ice moulded to their stoney forms. Each time the tide receded, more ice accumulated and clung to the surfaces of those rocks, so you were treated to a spectacular ice show at low tide.

We journeyed by numerous tourist cabins and many modernly-designed seaside houses that were owned by prominent Maritimers. The houses seemed to sit so precariously on rocky elevations, which looked out to a wavy sea.

These officers and senior non-commissioned officers in the bus were young men, twenty to twenty-nine years of age, interested in any mode of thought, so they listened to my: "What a terrible calamity it would be if the tide should overswell some day and savagely engulf these homes that are so adjacent to the sea."

"Aw, nuts!" shouted Andy Hebert, the American. "Wherever do you dream such stories. It's impossible. That's just like saying that Brooklyn Dodgers will win the world's championship."

"Go easy there, Andy," interrupted Bob. "The Dodgers did win the pennant a couple of years ago and almost beat the Yanks in the World Series."

"Well, miracles do happen, even in Brooklyn," said our American friend. So that closed the argument.

With a far-away gaze, I thought that there was something very peaceful, very cosy, in a cottage sea scene. Of course, people come to these cottages to fish, swim, boat, and lazily lie in the sun, but there's more to it than that. For some reason that I can scarcely fathom, people simply love looking out to sea. They

often entrancingly watch huge breakers dash themselves into submission against rocky shores. I think they often look out to sea without ever seeing anything! They just sit and stare, then their imaginations control them and they dream of some Paradise, some far-away Utopia, of everything that's good, and fine . . . and beautiful. That's relaxation at its zenith.

"There's St. John!" someone shouted. True enough, the New Brunswick coastal town could be seen through a break in the hills.

St. John housed a war-time population of 75,000 souls, 15,000 more men, women and children than were accommodated here in peace time. Yes, the little city was bustling with activity; no doubt war contracts of the smaller Canadian scale were giving eastern business interests a few boom years. In every coastal city, the section in juxtaposition with the harbour is usually filthy, dirty and dilapidated-looking. St. John pursued that trend, and this war-sent boom had made the water-front outrageously disagreeable. The city itself was old, so that was a self-explanation for the detestable condition of many constructions. People in St. John never walk erect because they are either walking up or down a hill, it seemed. The ordinary observer marvelled at automobiles and street-cars when they climbed those seemingly insurmountable hills with a nonchalant ease.

Arriving at the bus depot as scheduled, the gang piled out of their conveyance, quickly strolled to the Union Station and started purchasing tickets to New York City. To the armed forces, ticket prices were accessibly low; more of the "laughing lettuce" could be blown in the wonder city. From the agent the boys extracted the departure time of the train — it wasn't

leaving for three or four hours, so naturally these pilots would try to frivolously kill time. The shows and restaurants were open to patronage, and it must be truthfully said that St. John possessed two cafes that were equal to any in the Dominion. Anyway, the boys flirtatiously and flatteringly told the waitresses that!

The flyers were denied certain eatables during their meal—rationing in the Forces was almost non-existent. McDonald asked for a couple of extra lumps of sugar, was refused, but went on to say: "Gosh! I've been in the Air Force so long, I had almost forgotten that there was a war on. Remind me to write some of the civilians in this city—you know, just to keep up their morale!"

Having finished their toothpicking, the entire gang enjoyed a movie at the Capitol, the best cinema house in town.

It was time to board the train, so, after redeeming checked luggage, the flyers rushed into the proper New York coach. It seemed, by their guffaws and over-joyfulness, that the boys were tremendously excited over their Empire State venture. The big city would see action ; the debutantes would be thrilled with reckless romancing; Broadway would sit up and notice these British Commonwealth flyers. Those were some of their boastful, gigantic plans and assertions.

"Tickets, means of identification!" barked a Customs official, while the train still stood at the loading platform.

"Here are our tickets."

"Where are your 'H' forms?" interrupted the Customs servant. "They have to be presented before entry is permissible into the States."

"'H' forms? Our station Administrative Adjutant

told us that we could cross the border if we merely showed our leave forms."

"I'm sorry boys. We try to give Armed Forces' personnel all the breaks we possibly can, but, strangely enough, we are definitely insistent that men possess 'H' forms. You can get the necessary forms at any bank."

"All the banks are closed at this hour of the night. We'll miss an entire day of our New York stay," argued the boys.

The Customs man was sympathetic, but said he'd have to bar us passage on the train. So the gang, disgusted, picked up their baggage and beatently walked from the coach.

"Well," smiled Hebert, "it's just like your landlord claims . . . you always have trouble with a boarder."

With further jesting the airmen regained their optimism, and determinedly seconded : "They can't throw us off the train and get away with it. Today we have been denied entry, but tomorrow we'll get to New York or break our necks trying!"

Andy Hebert, who was an American in the Canadian R.C.A.F., was allowed to go across, so the original group was depleted by one member. Sonny Lark, the Anzac, Frank Allen, the Englander, Russ McDonald, Bob Durante and myself—all Canadians—now composed the wartime vacationers.

Busy St. John was definitely overcrowded ; no lodgings could be obtained at the Admiral Beatty, the most fashionable hotel in the town. In desperation, the boys and I had to be satisfied with a dumpy sort of a rooming house. Even in such humble surroundings, we slept very soundly. All you require for a good sleep

is to lead a good, honest life—then you can slumber in contentment. A rich man, with the most expensive and luxurious bedding, does not necessarily sleep better than a poor man. True relaxation comes with simple happiness.

In the morning this conventicle awoke early and swiftly prepared to take proper measures in securing an 'H' form. They breakfasted, then trotted down to the Bank of Montreal where the teller told them: "Boys, I want to acquaint you with the procedure used to procure 'H' forms by Service personnel. If a resident of the U.S.A. sends you a money order, a postal note or some other sort of postal cheque to the value of \$25, you will be admitted into the States."

"But we can't get money on such short notice; our leave is rapidly expiring. What's the other condition?"

"Well, the other method is more simple. All that is required of you is an Embarkation Pass Form. Servicemen are welcome to journey to New York on their final leaves in this continent."

"But we just have ordinary leave forms. We still are doing operational training in Canada."

"I'm sorry boys. We want to please you, but it's an impossibility," the teller added, with a final word.

With another disappointment, the flyers left dejectedly, and they mumbled a bit about their luck.

"Hey, fellows!" Bob shoutingly suggested. "We said that we would get to New York or bust, didn't we? I've got an idea. All we have to do is to get someone to print 'Embarkation Leave' across the top of our passes. Our forms are signed and acknowledged. No one will know the difference."

"Great idea, Bob!"

One hour later they took their adulterated copies to another bank and everything worked smoothly. Each man was able to buy U.S. currency with Canadian money up to the value of \$25. There were high exchange rates—15 per cent.—but the gang was only too pleased to pocket the green pictures of Abe Lincoln.

So, until departure time, the boys again went out to view St. John. I was impressed with one section of the town; that was the district adjoining Mount Pleasant. There were some beautiful homes, some old and others modernistically designed, but all very palatial looking from their high ground.

On the hour, the boys were down on the farewell platform at the station, and this time no trouble was experienced whatsoever.

"New York City, here we come!" we shouted, almost in defiance.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE train sped out of the station into the orgy blackness of night. An approximate time of twenty hours would elapse before New York would be reached, but the flyers meant to stay awake all night so that not an inch of U.S. territory would be unscrutinised. They would probably be flying over this area later on, from their base, but right now the New England States could be observed from earth level. Several times interrogation officials made an appearance on the train, and several passengers were given the old, familiar routine check. However, the airmen were scarcely noticed, and after a few hours the train rolled into Maine, the northern-most State of the Union.

To break the monotony of carriage travel, Frank Allen suggested: "Let's see how much we know about the Star-Spangled Banner Country. When we enter each State, one of us should be able to think of a story or something of interest about that State, because there is an overwhelming abundance of legendary anecdotes that are so interesting. Spill your stories, gentlemen, when we dash into each State."

"This is so minute, but it's something about Maine," speculated Allen. "I believe the State flower of Maine is the pine cone and tassel. This part of land that juts into Canada is populated densely with fir trees; consequently, the peculiar pine cone and tassel came to be the emblematic flower. Many of the first settlers who emigrated from France were rough and tough seekers

of the fortunes in the fur trade. They were similar to your couer-de-bois, Russ. They came from the Province of Maine, in France; naturally, that name voyaged over to the New World with them."

"Go on, Frank—you're more informative than an encyclopædia," we urged.

"Well, I can't remember much more distinctly, but Maine is nicknamed 'The Lumber State,' from the extensive forests. Being more glamorous—the Yanks always like being more sensational with words—it is also poetically known as the 'Pine Tree State.' But to the ordinary resident of Eastern North America, it is simply referred to as 'Down East'!"

"Not bad, Frank," I complimented. "You Britishers are geographical wizards, but I guess you have to know your Empire and the rest of the world."

"Plenty of light is cast on that particular subject, because the sun never sets on the British Empire," joked Durante.

"Bangor, Bangor—forty-five minute stop!" yelled the conductor.

"Let's get out and look the place over," someone suggested, "and besides, we're hungry."

About 35,000 souls live in the place, and the Bangor Daily News boasts of having the largest circulation in Maine. The fact is true, but it's hardly credulous, because Portland is twice the size of this city.

The boys trekked into the depot cafeteria, seated themselves and ordered sandwiches and coffee. The customers gazed at them—their uniforms were a little different from the attractively-cut American ones.

"What do those wings mean?" curiously asked a bystander.

"Oh, we're pilots."

"Good gracious," silently spoke Allen, the Briton. "They don't even know what the wings stand for. I thought they were universal?"

"Yanks," explained Durante, "are primarily interested in their own country. To them it's the greatest portion of land that God ever created!"

Most of the boys agreed, but I defendingly said: "Sure the Americans swear by their country. It is definitely great, and where else have such golden opportunities been granted to the common man? A lot of the successful men are Horatio Alger characters; they are very much like us Canadians, you Britishers and you Australians. They are broad-minded, too; they think of other nations. Look at Wilkie—he's fighting for a world good neighbour policy—he recognises that all men, regardless of race, creed or colour, are created equal. He knows that the Russians and Chinese will be post-war leaders and brothers to us. Don't you see, a guy will believe implicitly in his country if he is considered an equal and not a social outcast!"

The Australian had gone over to a rotating picture board and purchased some postcards.

"These are always interesting. This is Bangor in review. 'State Street' seems to be the main thoroughfare; and here's a picture of the Peirce Memorial and Post Office. The memorial was presented to the city by a Mr. Peirce—quite attractive, too! This little enterprising town is the home of the University of Maine, and on the campus grounds the Carnegie Library

has been constructed. See, these cards tell quite a story, eh mates?"

Completing their brief lunch, the gang sauntered out and soon they boarded the train once more at the conductor's "all aboard" command. Then again they rode on into the night, through the Maine Woods and rocks to Portland, the largest city in the Pine Tree State.

"This is the birthplace and home of Longfellow," I narrated. He once wrote a verse about Portland; I think it goes like this:—

Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.

"Here are more postcards that I just picked up," interrupted Lark, our postcard fiend. "Monument Square is the centre of the financial district. They seem to have a beautiful park along the coast where surf waters break—it's called the Eastern Promenade. A million dollar bridge has been built to accommodate north and south Portlanders. That's about all the gen I could get, but I just can't see why Portland hasn't become a greater Atlantic seaport, but then it doesn't proximate the manufacturing zone as do New York and Boston."

"Wow," whistled Durante, "are all American girls that pretty?" A very attractive blonde had just walked by and her figure had winked at the boys.

"Settle down Bob, you're just a wolf or in your case, a turtle—that's just wolf who is pretty slow," laughed Rus.

The train started rolling again. Most of the boys were tired and travel-weary so they rested, relaxed for the next few hours. When once more there was any sign of stirring, the sun had pushed back the dawn and the boys lifted heavy eyelids to glimpse Massachusetts.

"I've got a story about Massachusetts," stated Sonny, who was more awake than the others. "Wake up fellows and listen. Massachusetts really means a place of great hills. I guess the hills that the story-tellers spoke of are the bluish-appearing hills, southwest of Boston. Pioneers, who opened the district in and round the Appalachian region, called this piece of land 'The Old Bay Colony.' During the post-colonisation period, when it became incorporated into a state, Massachusetts was nicknamed appropriately, 'The Old Bay State.'"

"Well, thanks for waking us up. We should be in Boston at nine, shouldn't we?" asked McDonald.

In fact, the fliers were on the outskirts of Boston now, but with this war-time boom, the train was late in arriving.

Allen, the Englishman, smiled a story.

"One of the most important incidents that we islanders remember about Boston is their famous tea party. What a shame that was! Back home we could sure have used those precious Ceylon leaves and the cargo would be a God-send in this age."

"If you Englishmen wouldn't stop for tea every day, the war would have been over a year ago," surmised Bob Durante.

"Well, we are winning the war," emphasised Allen.

"Cut it out," we domineered, "the entire Commonwealth is doing the best it can."

The train smoked its way through Charlestown, a suburb of Boston.

"That's Bunker Hill Monument," I observed, "it was built during the years 1825 to 1843 to commemorate the historic Battle of Bunker Hill. Fellows, that little erection is 221 feet high—many travellers and sight-seers use a spiral flight of stone steps in reaching its summit to get a picturesque view of their surroundings."

Lark had once more purchased postcards and with their aid began his habitual travelogue.

"It's not much use in telling you countless things about the world-famous Harvard University. You know its educational greatness and how most of its graduates are assured of success. That school is the oldest centre of higher learning in the U.S., founded in 1636 at Cambridge and named after John Harvard, first donor and benefactor. Of current world interest, it's nice to see that this learning colossus possesses a Semitic Museum that should expugn those Aryan theories on anti-Semitism. Very close to the renowned historic Boston Common, are the Public Gardens. Covering twenty-five beautiful, gardened acres, this park is the envy of other cities. Another recreational beauty spot is the Esplanade along Charles River. This portion of the river has been spanned by many concrete bridges, which enhance its showness. Tremont Street is one of the outstanding thoroughfares of the city where a voluminous amount of traffic speeds every day. Bordering this typically charming bit of Boston are structures whose foundations have been instrumental in gaining metropolitan prestige to the city. On the religious side, there is historic King's Chapel and the Old Park Street Church. Close by, a towering shaft

dominates the Boston skyline. It is the Custom House where countless business transactions of this thriving port are conducted daily. I must mention the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, because it is the finest school of its kind in the world. You know Boston is talked about throughout the world, but it is not as densely populated as our Sydney in good, old Australia."

"Don't forget Boston's renowned Public Library, for this is one of the cultured cities of the Occidental world. It has probably 2,000,000 choice volumes with fine collections on Anthropology, Colonial history, your great Shakespeare. I wonder if any of those banned novels are on its shelves!" added Allen, who was gazing out of the window, and then continued with, "Have you chaps noticed that the majority of homes around the New England States are painted green and white?"

"What's the matter, Allen, is it different from peaceful, native England?" asked McDonald. "Is your mode of colouring superior?"

"Gosh, you North Americans always think we Englanders have a superiority complex," frowned Allen. "Hasn't octogenarian Shaw lectured to you about this type of thinking? Early in the war I quite vividly remember when the Yanks came over to England. The N.C.O.s wore their stripes with the point of the V on top. Londoners observed this change from our markings and understandingly knew that the difference was because of the forces. But when British personnel came to the States, bystanders shouted, 'Look! They are wearing their hooks upside down'."

The train pulled into Boston station, so argumentative conversation ceased for the moment. After a short stop the boys boarded a train at the South Station for

New York City. A train goes to the wonder city each hour from Boston, so this brief stop was not necessitated, but the gang was anxious to breath the air of Manhattan.

On this five hour trip, from Boston to New York, one realises how immense, how gigantic the productive wealth of the United States is. The entire railroad side is dotted with industries and you believe that all this expanse is just one city. Many parts of America are similar to this; small wonder then that the United States is appropriately called the arsenal of the world. Along the coast line one can see summer mansions, probably owned by the very businessmen who control industry in that district. Everyone must have moments of relaxation, whether he be a Wall Street tycoon or a common pauper.

As soon as the train had whistled into Rhode Island, Rus McDonald had a story about this small state.

"Rhode Island is fondly called 'Little Rhody,' because it is the smallest state in the Union; you might say the smallest star, but it glows brightly! The island has a fancied resemblance to the Island of Rhodes in the Mediterranean and it is believed Rhode Island was christened this name because, as I said, of the similarity to it. The state flower is the violet. It blossoms each spring before most of the other blooming varieties, so after each winter's bleakness, it is loved by horticulturalistic Rhode Islanders. I think Rhode Island first emphasised what the U.S.A. cherishes greatly—its democratic freedom. Little Rhody was the first refuge for the oppressed of all faiths. the basis of true humanitarianism."

"Not bad, Rus," I complimented, "but we're in

Connecticut, so who has a story about the most mispronounced State in America?"

"I'll begin," volunteered Bob Durante. "It seems that Connecticut was named by the North American Indian. In their tribal language the word means 'long river.' Early settlers of the land were very progressive and made or carved nutmegs out of wood, then they palmed off these useless trinkets to unsuspecting strangers, or, as Barnum would say — suckers. As a consequence, to this day Connecticut is known as 'the Nutmeg State.' Its State flower is the mountain laurel."

"You know, it's amazing how much we 'foreigners' know about the U.S.A.," suggested McDonald in wonderment. "We know the Union geographically, we can talk endlessly on American topics, we know the exact position of Tucson, Arizona or Helena, Montana. Yet some Americans, when quizzed on Canada, Australia or Great Britain, often give vague, foolish answers. They think Saskatchewan is in Calgary, they expect to find nothing but Eskimos, Indians and buffaloes north of their border-line. They are familiar with London, England, because it rivals New York City in population and magnificence. They are cognisant with Darwin, Australia, because didn't General MacArthur save that port from Nipponeese aggression? They seem to have at their world-knowledge command only what they see in the news reels in their picture houses. We're going to have a swell time in New York telling Manhattaners that our Dominions have been discovered and explored. I'll have to admit, though, that the top-ranking performers in our countries always go to the States to seek lucrative positions. From Canada: Alexis Smith, Deanna Durbin, George Arliss, Walter Pidgeon, Mary Pickford, Jack Carson, to name a few. went south to

make money in the Land of Opportunity. English cinema stars and players from the legitimate theatre are countless in American entertainment houses. A few of the most notable—Vivien Leigh, Charles Laughton, Cary Grant, Ray Noble, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Leslie Howard, Gracie Fields and Ida Lupino—have come to Yankee Land to thicken their bankrolls. That's what I like about America—a poor, penniless child can rise to become another Louis B. Mayer or a Bill Knudsen."

"Hey, Rus, stop!" hushed Bob Durante. "Here we are in New York State. It's your turn to gen us up about this State."

"Anyone could talk endlessly on this piece of territory, because it is the most publicised State in the Union outside of Texas and California. New York State's population outnumbers Canada's. Because of its commercial supremacy and political importance, it has long been known as the Empire State, but many people know it as the 'Excelsior State' from the motto on its coat-of-arms. It was named in honour of the Duke of York by the people who grasped this plum from the Dutch. England has always been particularly fond of the rose, so New York State's flower is the rose—beautiful and symbolic. New York City lies within the confines of the State, but it's such an amazing city that it seems to be in an atmosphere, in a world, of its own. New York is the hub of our axis-wheeling globe. It's so terrifically publicised that all Continents gasp at its tremendous accomplishments. The main thoroughfare, Broadway, is spherically recognised. And why should it not be? The film capital of the world, Hollywood, has used Broadway in film titles repeatedly. The stories that are radioed to us about 'The Wonder City' scarcely seem credulous because of their unconceivable probability. They are fantastic in design, they pack punch,

they have spice, they are original, for most brilliantly-formed ideas have their conception on the banks of the Hudson River. Here, twentieth century fashions are obsolescent, everything is of a new age. Soon we shall see what makes this 'Empire within a Nation' click."

An electrically-propelled train took the coaches underground when the city was reached, and the boys rode into Grand Central Station excitedly.

CHAPTER FIVE

GRAND Central Terminal—the largest railroad station in the world! Countless underground tracks find their way to this colossal terminal, where gigantic splendour awaits the passenger. The designers and contractors must have had worldly foresight to be able to erect a building so minute in detail and yet so startlingly expansive.

When Bob Durante stepped into the world-famed waiting room, his only comment was, "Boy! This place would sure hold a lot of hay!"

"You don't have to walk outside this little shack to be able to enjoy the city," observed McDonald. This place has built-in entrances to the Hotels Roosevelt and Commodore. What service!"

We had wired in reservations to the Hotel Claridge, which wasn't a Waldorf-Astoria, but was conveniently situated. It was right on Times Square, the heart of the wonder city. The best show houses and night clubs could be reached in fifteen minutes. A cab was hailed and this merry company proceeded to Forty-Fourth at Broadway. Every second car in New York seemed to be a taxi, and all cabbies drove at reckless speeds, weaving in and out of traffic. Through a sort of astra-dome on the roof of the cab, the fliers craned their necks to see multi-storied buildings, which were instantly recognised; these were the most advertised erections in the world. Actually, they seemed larger than photographs presented them. After a very rapid tour, the gang got off at their hotel, were whisked up

to their rooms to clean themselves and brush off that travelling appearance.

Sonny Lark was pouring through a Sunday edition of "The Times" with Andy Hebert, the Yank, who had met the boys in the lobby. Andy swaggered with, "If you want to see the town, stick with me. I know little old New York better than LaGuardia. Yes, sir! Tag along with me."

"Oh, we peasants will get around," I said. "What a newspaper this 'Sunday Times' is! It has 150 pages of everything under the sun. It would take a week to read! What say, gang?—Let's go down to Dempsey's restaurant to eat, then we can go up the Strand and see Charlie Barnett in person."

"Good. We'll be able to start our holiday with a good show. It's about five o'clock, so let's walk down to Jack's place and see if we can manoeuvre in and out of these Broadway crowds."

We Commonwealth members and Andy used an elevator to be hurled down to ground level, then we pushed our way through a mob of humanity.

"This Broadway is just like an exhibition," marvelled Frank Allen. "Where do all these people come from? All the world seems to be here basking in this carnivalic atmosphere. Look at that stand over there—even on Broadway they sell hot-dogs or Coney Island red-hots. Give a Yank a hot-dog, a dish of ice cream and a good movie and he thinks he's in Paradise . . . Here on this world-renowned Avenue are the most famous theatres in the world. An actor is considered successful if he has played on any of the stages. At night, this section, from Forty-First to Fifty-Third Streets, is brilliantly lighted; all types of signs are

occulting and flashing in the greatest illuminated display on earth. Small wonder, then, that this portion is known from Pole to Pole as 'The Great White Way.' It's the longest street in the world, and hotels, theatres, memorials, famous homes of world-repute border its pavements, from Bowling Green's financial district to the beautiful Van Cortlandt Park, the city limits. Remember some of the old songs that popularised this street? George M. Cohen wrote 'Forty-five Minutes From Broadway' and 'Good-bye Broadway, Hello, France,' during the last war. I can see why he loved this street."

The rest of the mob weren't paying any attention—they were exchanging flirty glances with hundreds of pretty girls. No other spot in the world possessed girls who could measure up to New York women. In Manhattan, to be recognised, a girl must be original, daring, dashing, unusual, beautiful—because gorgeous women come a dime a dozen. None of the girls is shy, unaggressive or self-conscious. They ooze with vitality and oomph. Their dress must be conspicuous ; they must stand out on all occasions ; they must be the belles of the ball. The best designers in the country give them hat and dress fashions that have never been patterned before. I would say that their dress is not only outstanding, but also revealing, but a girl must remember that she is more attractive by what she conceals.

One would think that this city uses over half of all cosmetics manufactured in America. The New York girl is striking, with new eyelashes, lifted eyebrows, well-powdered complexions with dabs of rouge, vivid lip-sticked mouths and creative hair styles. She always walks in such a manner that her whole figure makes

eyes at you. Yes, she's attractive to the oomph degree. No one would say that she is a duchess, but she certainly is exciting!

Soon Jack Dempsey's restaurant was reached and the boys were revolved inside by the door. After checking our coats and hats, the head waiter tabled us near the orchestra platform. The gang got a look at the "Manassa Mauler" himself and, all being sportorially-minded, they thrilled at a painting on the wall. Done very artistically, the painting was headlined, "The World's Greatest Sporting Event." The place was "Soldiers' Field," in Chicago, where Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey were spotlighted in a boxing ring, surrounded by a wild fight mob of 102,000 cheering fans. Truly a great moment in sport! On each table was pictured some fight in which Dempsey fought. If you wandered from table to table, Jack's career shouted from the table tops. A photographer snapped you while you sat, so that you could boast to friends that Jack Dempsey once fed you.

A lady came over to our table and asked, "Are you boys graduates from West Point?"

The boys smiled and replied, "No, madam. Our blue uniforms may be somewhat similar to theirs, but we belong to the R.A.F."

"Is that a Cadet School in Virginia?"

Allen, the Britisher, exploded with, "Lady, the R.A.F. is an air force that has done nothing but save Britain and civilisation itself!" When he asked her if she had heard of "the Battle of Britain" she left in silence.

After eating a most appetising meal, the airmen started to pound the pavement to the Strand Theatre.

Soon the embittered Allen remarked, "Most waiters in New York are parasites. They are harshly offended if you don't tip them properly. Back in England we work for our money. Don't any of these fellows realise that they are paid for their labours? Never overpay, and then wait for your change, because most of these fellows will walk away and pocket the money as nonchalantly as ever. Well, here's the Strand —let's go in."

All Service men could gain admission to any movie house for 30 cents—really a terrific reduction. New York shows a Service man a good time, and cheaply. Most of these Broadway cinema houses are luxuriously built and have three or four tiers. These mezzanines are almost like box seats at an opera, so comfortable, with excellent views of the screen. The fliers enjoyed a good show, "Destination Tokyo," starring Cary Grant and John Garfield. At intermission, the in-person show, with Charlie Barnett and his Orchestra, shot into the spotlight. Ella Mae Morse was his charming songstress, and three comedians, Low, Hite and Stanley, kept the audience in an uproar. Charlie's sax kept the jitterbugs in the front rows hooting and clamouring for more of his solidness.

Being a trifle fatigued, the boys walked slowly back down Broadway with a jostling crowd. They stopped at a men's store and were fascinated by some gaudy ties which should shame a rainbow ; they were really ostentatiously fine.

"I'm going in to buy a couple," voiced Hebert. "Boy! They're louder than some of Crosby's pet ties. Some colour!"

"Yes, sir," said an enthusiastic employee, "we have exclusive patterns, styled for the well-dressed gentle-

man. You know 99 men out of 100 can't tie a cravat properly. Once the bow has been tied, never try to straighten or smooth out the wrinkles on the hanging end. Pull the tie tight and you have one small, likeable crease down the middle of your tie, then your knot stays perfectly in the centre of your shirt lapels and will never have a tendency to hang awkwardly to one side."

After a quick sale, the gang sauntered on. Broadway was alive—it breathed and shrieked with life. Congestion was seen at each street corner. Waves of people flowed by intersections, holding the voluminous traffic at a standstill at times. New York cops all seemed to have red faces from blowing whistles desperately at jay-walking pedestrians and the always-in-a-hurry taxi-cabs. Deformed and disabled men played screechy musical instruments, trying to coax dimes from sympathisers' pockets. Most Service men were particularly generous to these unfortunates, because they seemed to realise how cruel the world can be to returned, destitute war veterans. Alongside this scene of destitution was beauty and gaiety. Laughing, frivolous Army men and their girl friends stood near a sidewalk florist. Girls giggled while the boys pinned a beautiful orchid or a couple of carnations to their coats. The famous nut vendors did great business, and this tantalising aroma was one of the nicest smells on Broadway apart from the perfumed air that was inhaled each time a girl floated by. Everyone appeared handsome, for a happy face is a handsome face. Neon lights twinkled and beckoned customers to famous night spots advertising the most gorgeous girls in the world. This was Broadway at night . . . scintillating, awe-inspiring, reckless—a million miles from the war.

As soon as the hotel was reached, the fliers ran up

to their room to prepare for a first night's slumber. Sleep is annoying when you think of all the excitement that will be missed during the night hours. Well, there is one consolation: you can begin afresh the next morning.

A ringing bell awoke us in the morning and we dressed hurriedly, for limitless adventure was to be ours for the asking. After a combination breakfast-lunch we strode to the Air Force Club, which was strongly recommended by other Service organisations.

"How do you do, boys!" smiled a charming hostess. The gang and I were immediately impressed.

"We've heard so much about this cosy spot, so we dropped in to have a look-see."

The young lady apparently knew her job, because she was the first one in New York to recognise that the boys were officers in the R.A.F., R.C.A.F. and R.A.A.F. respectively.

"You're more than welcome here. You'll find out that, since the war, New York is a friendly city. We have countless free admission tickets to some of the best entertainment houses in Manhattan. Several Long Islanders are desirous of welcoming British Forces into their homes. These are very good, wealthy families, so you can be assured of a fine time. Right now, I have tickets for many radio broadcasts at the world's largest studios. You may have tickets for the Fred Allen Show, Your All-Time Hit Parade, The Hit Parade, or Fred Waring's programme. A really enjoyable time can be had at any of these performances. There are a few 'don't miss' hits in the city at the moment. On your 'must see' list place Sonja Henie's Ice Show at the top, and you certainly must see the two most-talked-about

musical shows in America, 'Oklahoma' and 'One Touch Of Venus.' At Rockefeller Centre we have conducted tours of N.B.C.; we have sight-seeing buses to show newcomers the Wonder City; Service men can travel freely on harbour ferries, so New York's outlines will be captured by you. Drop in each afternoon for tea—and tickets for other centres, like the Metropolitan Opera, may be available."

"Thanks for the tickets. It has been splendid of you and New Yorkers to be so hospitable to us."

"Is this part of your Lend-Lease aid?" laughed Sonny Lark. "Good afternoon—we'll call again."

Once outside, Andy Hebert asked, "Well, what do you think of our little city now? Three days of this frolicking and you fellows will be singing the 'Star-Spangled Banner' so loudly that you'll awake Francis Scott Key from his grave. Let's stretch our dogs and join some of these Times Square jitterbugs at the Paramount."

Soon, we were ushered into the Paramount, the favourite stamping ground of rug-cutters and the Mecca for Frank Sinatra's teen-aged swooners. The projectioning of "The Miracle Of Morgan's Creek" was one of the best comedies of the year. You'd think a doctor had visited the place—the audience were in stitches. But those youngsters who commanded all the front seats were eagerly awaiting the in-person show. The house lights dimmed to a pleasant glow, a beautiful coloured effect was attained on the stage curtain, then, from the pit, Johnny Long and his Orchestra were raised on an elevating auxiliary stage. From this breath-taking spectacle came sweet music, and the young swingsters hooted, applauded, then a hush fell on the theatre, so the music could be heard once more.

Long bowed graciously for his applause, then Gene Williams, a new singing star, ran out on to the stage and sang the number one song hit of America, "My Heart Tells Me So." It's a treat and a spectacle to watch these teen-aged girls, who come to the Paramount, scream for their favourite performers. They are an essential, integral part of America. When Gene Williams sang, he smoothed his hair back, Sinatra style, almost uncontrollably. His grin brought laudable sighs and exclamations, truly a demonstration worth seeing. After performances, these kids clamour for autographs in the most brazen ways. Gene was encored several times by these swooning youngsters.

Hazel Scott, the sensational negro pianist and a favourite boogie-woogiest of this music loving generation appeared next. Her banging of the ivories was super-colossal. She seemed to slouch most desirably on the stage, weaving her shoulders and whirling one hand which held a silk hankie, resplendent in colour. She was gowned to perfection and her beauty was emphasised when she rolled her lovely head up and down to keep beat with her steps. With an unapproachable distinction and verve, she played a popular tune on the piano, then the kids shouted for "Cow - Cow - Boogie" and Hazel obliged, with the orchestra picking up the tempo. During the number Hazel laughed and showed her pearly teeth, curvaceous mouth. It was worth the price of admission just to hear someone laugh so wholesomely, so freely. This was American music, music that was felt, music that made the hearer quiver with emotion, with exaltation, and it almost made you shout and cavort in frenzy.

At the conclusion of this great show we thought we'd drop into the Stage Door Canteen.

Everyone agreed to the suggestion, so we turned up Forty-Fourth and walked into the most talked about canteen in the world. The American Theatre Wing sponsored the canteen, which wasn't a very pretentious building, but did have facilities for a good time. The most sought after stars appear here frequently to entertain the fighting man. People are so courteous at the Stage Door; everyone is terrifically polite. The fliers' coats and hats were checked, then a hostess warmly welcomed the boys and immediately ushered cookings awaited. Servicemen must look constantly hungry, for people always want to feed and stuff the poor, famished dears. A couple of pretty, young, junior hostesses came over to talk to the Commonwealth aggregation, and it's amazing how the feminine sex can make a tough Marine or a rowdy Australian as docile as a lamb, or controversially, ferocious as a wolf. bi-ped that is. It's a certainty that the Stage Door Canteen is the best playhouse in the world, for each night different stars give the Forces everything they've got.

After a thoroughly enjoyable time, the boys and I wended our way into the street once more and edged over to the Rivoli theatre, where "For Whom The Bell Tolls" was in its final run. Many records were shattered when this movie played at the Rivoli: for twenty-nine weeks. It was a great show, dazzling in Technicolor, superbly directed with a great cast. starring Gary Cooper and lovely Ingrid Bergman.

After curtain-fall, Bob Durante, who was a lover of bands, said:

"Let's catch a taxi and go over to the Hotel Pennsylvania. Charlie Spivak is playing the sweetest trumpet in the world! We can get a few drinks at

the bar, then hurry to the Roosevelt where Guy Lombardo wows the crowd nightly. Gosh, my elbows are beginning to wear out from leaning on so many bars, but a guy can't stay thirsty, not in New York."

"Listen to the drunkard talk," humoured McDonald, "all he ever orders is a great big bottle of ginger ale, then he wonders what ails him!"

We laughed, hailed a cab and proceeded to the Pennsylvania, where Charlie Spivak thrilled us with wonderfully arranged music, then we finished the evening by going to the Roosevelt for Guy Lombardo's music. It certainly was a busy and complete day; in bed we talked over the day's experiences.

We awoke rather early, considering the previous night's fun. We had been fortunate enough to be introduced to an influential citizen who was going to show us the city, being a guide and a chauffeur.

When the philanthropist came around, he began with:

"Boys, I really haven't the time to show you the interiors of most of these places, but I will point out some of the world renowned buildings and I'll try to give you some interesting details. We'll start out by going to Madison Square Gardens. Probably you young fellows know more about the place than I do, but I can say that it is Manhattan's largest arena used for spectacular theatrical shows, circuses and sporting matches. Hockey, basketball and boxing draw huge crowds of fifteen to twenty thousand people. Different programmes are held nightly and the ice surface of today can be ploughed up for a basketball game tomorrow. With a championship being won almost monthly, this should be acclaimed New York's best 'victory garden'."

"We'll get a chance to see the inside of the Garden when we go to Sonja Henie's show or to a hockey game."

"Why certainly," replied Mr. Jones, "now we can motor to the Public Library. There are countless, well-stocked libraries in New York; over thirty in Manhattan of major importance, which Andrew Carnegie started with a gift of nearly \$6,000,000. Morgan and Rockefeller have also founded libraries as benevolent gestures to New York. Here on Fifth Avenue, this tremendous public library is the central building for all other libraries, consisting of forty-six branches. There are over 2,000,000 volumes, three exhibition rooms, two art galleries with famous collections and fine prints. It would take a man thousands of years to read all the material, but wouldn't he be a sage? One of the satellite libraries is a library of books in Braille for blind people."

After proceeding down Seventh, Mr. Jones pointed out the Pennsylvania railroad terminal, a masterpiece in construction. This passenger rendezvous had taken seven years to complete and had cost the terrific sum of \$80,000,000. Two tubes connect with the station under the Hudson River and four tubes under the east river, a mammoth job in submergial work.

Glancing quickly at the terminal as we rode by, we were manouvreed through traffic to the Empire State Building, a building beyond our times, an erection of magnificence and Everethian proportions. It dominated the skyline; its most altitudinous projection seemed to shout defiance to the more humble, other midget building enterprises of twenty storeys or so.

"Even we New Yorkers," began Mr. Jones, "are

continually fascinated by its supremacy, its omnipotence. Later on you'll be able to go up to its lofty observatories and see New York—a sight that you will remember forever and a day. When it was officially opened in 1931, it became the largest building in the world, 102 stories high—1,265 feet! Al Smith, the president and former politician, directs the operations of this skyscraper, which has the highest valuation of any construction in Manhattan. Let's slip on to Greenwich Village."

We motored by the "Little Church Around The Corner" or sometimes known as the Church of the Transfiguration. Many celebrities are wedded here, so it is well loved by actors and show people. Such actors as Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Richard Mansfield, John Drew and Harry Montague are immortalised on windows dedicated to their memory. Churches always seem important to a vacationer. He likes their Gothic or Roman beauty and he likes to find seclusion, peace and quiet amongst the pews. This is one place where a rich man and a poor man are on equal footing, for what profit a man if he were to gain the whole world, yet suffer the loss of his soul.

Passing through Greenwich Village Mr. Jones spoke about the Washington Arch and Square, commemorating the 100th anniversary of Washington's first inauguration as President. The New York University, Judson Memorial, Baptist Church and several interesting statues are found on the Square. Of course, the University which is wordly known as N.Y.U. would be recognised as a football centre by you fellows. It is the world's largest educational storehouse and has a brilliant faculty of nearly 2,000 members. We will

go by Chinatown and take in that Chinese populated district, and we'll see the island's famous bridges."

After some rapid accelerating, Mr. Jones pointed out the Brooklyn Bridge.

"This \$25,000,000 bridge is one of New York's most advertised, because it has been legendised. Constructed in 1883, its 1,595 foot span was the bridging achievement and talk of the nineteenth century. The second suspension there is the Manhattan Bridge, a 1,470 foot marvel. The third bridge is the Williamsburg Bridge, the longest of the three, 1,600 feet of colossity."

Stopping just a few moments to see these steel marvels, Mr. Jones continued to Wall Street, considered to be the most famous quarter mile of financial institutional housings in the world, with its internationally regarded Stock Exchange. From here we retracked our steps and eventually wound up in the downtown sections, motoring by Grand Central Station, then St. Patrick's Cathedral, which is acclaimed to be the most beautiful church in America. There is always rich pageantry at the altar, which is inlaid with precious stones, being so great in design, that the hands of God seemed to have made it. Magnificently stained glass windows depict lives of canonised saints, who are immortal and greatly revered in Church History.

"How is it," queried Bob Durante, "that Catholics always have such splendid churches? They are the finest pieces of architecture in our hemisphere, seeming to capture some of that building lore that belonged to ancient Greeks and Romans or to that glorious age of Renaissance."

Mr. Jones didn't speak for a moment, but looked straight ahead, with his grey head still, chin up.

"Maybe Catholics place so much devotedness, belief and trust in their faith that they realise that nothing impressive enough could be financed to house God. Surely One as dominant as He should only be worshipped in the choicest of groomings. Now, do you think St. Patrick's Cathedral is suitable for One as omnipotent as He? But let's deviate from the subject, religion is the most conflicting subject on earth. Right at this moment I want to show you Rockefeller Centre."

Rockefeller Centre—you must say those words in awe, for this is the greatest project on this heavenly body ever attempted by one man. It is a virtual city within a city, three solid areas that are constructive inspiration to the remainder of the universe. Radio City is one of the main portions of the Centre, comprised of the R.C.A. building, R.K.O. building and Radio City Music Hall. Broadcasting studios of modernness, roof gardens, restaurants, theatres, are to be found in the R.C.A. building. The concourses are lined with wonderful shops and the grandeur of the sunken plaza in front of the R.C.A. is remarkable.

Bob answered Mr. Jones' question of how we liked the skating rink that approximates Rockefeller Centre.

"Great! Two or three minutes from the hub-bub of City noises, you can enjoy a skate, forgetting New York's superlatives."

Youngsters and elders, who wanted to be young, were skating on the ice surface. Some were graceful, others struggled to just stay on their feet and others

raced vigorously. There were plenty of spills, but no one seemed to get hurt. Girls wore pretty costumes, so it was hard to surmise whether skating alone attracted all these spectators. Two observatory restaurants were sunken at each end of the rink, another feature that couldn't be adequately described. We watched the various skaters for a few more enjoyable moments, then proceeded on again. To attain our next objective, Central Park, we motored by Carnegie Hall.

We discovered that Central Park was a Wonderland within a Wonder City, for here in the heart of a financial, business city, the outdoor air was preserved.

It seemed that the Garden of Eden had been transplanted here, for wooded spots, pools and a remarkable Shakespearean Garden were to be viewed. It was indeed marvellous that land assessors had spared these fifty blocks to beautify Manhattan instead of reaping enormous tax profits and real estate values. The concert "Shell" and zoo attract thousands who go to Central Park for relaxation. All sightseers enjoyed the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a building of thirty-eight galleries and rooms, which protected precious collections of world art, selected from every corner of the civilised continents. There are wonderful old Assyrian, Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman masterpieces as well as Chinese, Japanese and East Indian works of art, lacquers, jade and ivory. Paintings from medieval times adorned show cases; truly collections that all the Princes of India might find difficult to buy. Cleopatra's Needle, an obelisk originating in Egypt some 3,500 years ago, was one of the Park's most gaped at monuments. It would take days to rove around the park to inspect all the gardens,

so Mr. Jones motored on once more. We quickly went by Columbia University, through the Harlem district, where half a million negroes lived. Journeying through the Bronx, we wanted to get a glimpse of Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds, homes of two great ball clubs. That was the final interest place visited, furthermore, everyone had developed a savage appetite.

Mrs. Jones had a most delicious meal awaiting us and she asked what we thought of this city.

"We have never seen anything like it!" Bob emphasised. "Why has the U.S.A. progressed so much more than Canada? Believe me, after this war I believe the States is the spot for me. There seems to be so much success that a fellow can grasp here."

Mr. Jones watched the young flier thoughtfully for a moment, folded his arms and said:

"Yes, America is a green pasture. You could almost say that our resourceful advancement was due to gambling men. Here we gamble for security, fortunes, progress. We are not as conservative as Canadian business men—we take a chance, and often. If a man has a few thousand dollars he does not rest and live a pensioned life of comparative ease; he invests all his money, he gambles. He either makes a \$100,000 or he becomes penniless, but that's why industry and commerce have leaped so fantastically. Private initiative and enterprise have moulded this industrial empire. Bob, you see success and wealth in America, you want to secure U.S. citizenship; that may be a smart move, but then it may be disastrous. In the post-war plans of your country remodelisation, less conservatism, great commercial attainments should be the goal of you young fellows. Heavens, your natural

resources are infinite, your people are great, so stay north of our border and begin a Canadian Renaissance Age!"

Our host ended his speech with a flourish of his hand and that was the only thing that had detracted our attention. We ourselves were almost breathless; for great ideas were formulated. With the whirlwind tour climaxed, besides eating a hearty meal, we ran up to our hotel for a rest, but soon Durante was again suggesting going out.

"Let's take in the show at the Roxy, then catch the Lucky Strike programme at Carnegie Hall. Everyone game?"

He got a feeble nod of assent, so once more hats and coats were donned by the gang.

On the way Bob commented:

"Kate Cameron, of 'The News,' labels 'The Lodger' a real thriller. Merle Oberon, George Sanders and Laird Cregar star in this Twentieth Century Fox release. There's also supposed to be a wow of a stage show."

The cinema houses in Manhattan are majestic and the Roxy rivalled the Music Hall for colossity, for patronage. Standing on expensively rugged floors, the boys admired the jutting balconies, the huge stage, swathed and set off by curtains of a most extraordinary design. It's difficult to concentrate on a screen when such theatrical beauty calls your attention. The "on the stage" show was of a very high calibre, headlined by the Chamber Music Society of Lower Basin Street with Paul Lavalle and his orchestra. Milton Cross, who

was spotlighted in a box removed from the stage, made the master of ceremonies' job look easy. A new comedian, Jack Durant, gave the audience their laughs for the night. Everyone in New York tries to imitate and mimic Frank Sinatra—that's always good for laughs and howls. It finds favour with the bobby-soxers, anyway. Next, an extra special attraction was encored on repeatedly. The beautiful Helen Forrest sang popular, new ditties like "Besame Mucho" and "My Heart Tells Me," to a very responsive crowd. Completing her singing chore with a medley of songs that her former boss, Harry James had made famous. Helen was thunderously applauded.

We moved out as soon as Paul Lavalle played the National Anthem. We were in a hurry to get to Carnegie Hall for the radio broadcast. Persons must be seated about fifteen minutes prior to the "on the air" signal. No one, obviously, is admitted during the broadcasting of a programme, therefore this seems to be the only amusement centre where a starting is never late.

Carnegie Hall—a quirinal amongst Broadway's playhouses. These mezzanines seemed so lofty to us and your neck was certainly strained if you wanted to get a quick look at the gorgeous girls in the top balcony. To outsiders this is the only concert hall in New York, for so many distinguished theatrical players bring this hall luminary prominence, and as Lucky Strike people say, "The Best Tunes Of All Go To Carnegie Hall." This acoustically-perfect hall has certainly won a lot of world friends and influenced many stage lives.

"Your All Time Hit Parade" had a quinessence

that gave you delight which could hardly be matched by any other entertainment circle in New York. A radio programme is given so spontaneously, without a single hesitation, that everyone's attention is focused on the performers until their time has clapsed.

"That Mark Warnow is a real orchestra leader," admiringly said Bob.

Indeed he was great, for his orchestra members played with unequalled musicianship. Of particular interest to each breathless listener was Mark's harpist, who was a pretty blonde girl, but extremely shy. Before the commencement of each musical score, a beautifully melodious harpial strain was her initiating gesture. People, several thousand miles away, probably heard the harp, but could never appreciate the timing and the exactness necessitated to co-ordinate this feature into arrangements. The famous chants of Lucky Strike's tobacco auctioneers brought smiles, but laughs had to be suppressed and many guffaws were strangled in the esophagus. How a buyer understood that mumbled and jumbled surge of eloquence was beyond comprehension, but his final words, "Sold American," were distinctive enough.

Often you use your imaginary powers when entranced by radio hearings. You would say that you were infallible in describing what a certain announcer looked like. Lucky's mellow voiced, perfectly dictioned, advertising wonder, was a well-aged man. Partly baldish, everyone would certainly say that he had seen his "middle flirties."

Bea Wain, the charming songstress, sang the hit tune of the week and a couple of other aged hit tune

favourites. Jerry Wayne was the male singer, and besides these two talented youngsters, an ably directed choral group vocalised on some early twentieth century tunes, which concluded the half hour broadcast.

"We'll have to go to more radio studios," Rus said; "those have been some of the most delightful minutes that we have spent in New York."

"Hey, gang." spoke up Andy Hebert, "let's browse around Broadway, do a bit of souvenir hunting, get amongst the crowds and have a good time. Whoa, what do you all say to a good old American Hotdog?"

We had stopped in front of a small hotdog concession and the mustard, weiner smell got the best of Andy. Yes, for ten cents you could have a lunch, the best value in the Empire State, outside of perhaps the nickel subway ride. We washed our dogs down with lemonade, a pineapple drink and Coca-Cola.

"Yes sir." McDonald said, smacking his lips, "this is a feast that the chefs in the Waldorf couldn't better."

Allen had been fairly silent until now, but he broke his sobriety with:

"There's a souvenir shop across the street where we can pick up a few trinkets."

We dodged through a maze of traffic and finally emerged unscathed at the store door.

"The first thing I'm going to do," began Sonny, "I'm going to buy about a hundred postcards. Believe me, the folks back in Sydney will certainly know I tangled with New York. Those visitor guide books look

attractive, too, or how about one of these inscriptioned banners ? "

One of the most popular banners was a huge, smirky, red-coloured pennant which had a large star centred on it. Yes, the star of the family was serving in this war !

" Here's what I've always wanted to gift my mother with," Bob said, with a look of satisfaction.

He had picked out a music box of a golden colour which played a tingling tune unfalteringly, a very beautiful musical gem. Frank Allen asked the shop keeper if he had a fitting pennant that he could take back to the United Kingdom.

" Yes, I have the very thing," and he dug into his unlimited supply of trivialities. He smiled and pulled out a flag, which had boldly and brazenly written on it, " We shall not falter, we shall not fail, for our navies still sail."

Rus McDonald purchased a ring that was almost as large as a bracelet; Sonny also bought a miniature Empire State Building and cuddled it fondly. Louie, the boss, bade the gang and me goodnight after this shopping excursion and threw in:

" Drop a few bombs for me, eh boys ? "

Our happy group spotted a confectionery, so once more plodded into an establishment. It was nearly Valentine's Day and some of the gals back home must be remembered, so candy, boxed in heart-shaped containers, was eyed. Some of these Valentine chocolate boxes were priced five and ten dollars, but their attractiveness was hard to resist. Rus McDonald

bought a box, shaped as cupid's heart and tied with a red, silken cloth—very beautiful. The others bought some soft fudge, scattered with choice Brazilian nuts. We were going to have a treat in the hotel room and we did when we arrived in our Times Square Hotel some fifteen minutes later. I seated myself comfortably then began writing a letter to be enclosed with my Valentine gift:

Dearest 'Rie.

That song writer who composed 'When It's June In January' must have been in New York City when he was inspired. I know that I have been particularly elated, and these last few days in January on Broadway have been some of the most blissful ones in my life. There is only an ache: I miss you terribly and I wish so very much that you were here with me in Manhattan.

We would have so much fun! Everything that you have ever read of is here in New York City. You used to go for Sonja Henie's skating in moving pictures. well, I'd take you to huge Madison Square Gardens and you would see her performing majestically, in person! You'd love that!

You'd wear your most gorgeous gown, you know. the one with the indescribable blue colour, and we'd go night-clubbing. On the way I'd buy you a lovely corsage of roses, set off in foggy green leaves as only New York florists can picturesquely do it. You like roses so much. Remember a long time ago in youth when I gave you your first rose? That screwball Tony was pestering us and when he saw the half-bloomed rose, he said, 'Is this a budding romance?' It was funny at the time, but there's so much sentiment

attached to that little incident. Or I could take you to Coney Island and we could ride the Staten Island ferry, where your hair would blow in the wind.

But you're not here; that hurts. I'm sending this little Valentine present to you with all the captured essence of Times Square. Breath in that perfumery atmosphere when you receive the gift and live with me on Broadway !



CHAPTER SIX

BOB DURANTE awoke earlier than the other fellows and I, for he had a sort of a special mission. He wanted to catch the early performance at Radio City Music Hall and because he was so sportorially minded, he meant to see Yankee Stadium, even if it was in the off season. He walked briskly down Broadway and a young negro accosted him.

"Shine, mister?" he pleaded with white, startling eyes. In the early mornings there were many of these bootblacks who were very insistent that a man get his shoes nuggetted, for competition was keen.

"Okay," Bob said and gave in with a smile, then he was queried unceasingly.

"That uniform you got, ain't American. Where do you come from?"

Well, here's someone, thought Bob, that knows I'm not a West Point cadet. He answered,

"I belong to the R.C.A.F.; I'm a Canadian flier."

"Gee, you're the first of them kind that I have ever had," and the boy began to really shine Bob's shoes.

Previously, Bob had been acquainted with the independence of New Yorkers, the brazen ways of girls, that positiveness of your own dominance, spirit. Even this seven-year-old bootblack had that spirit, a most

precious endowment. A well-dressed, cigar-smoking gentleman quizzed the kid with,

"Hey, snowball, can you give me a good shine?"

"I most certainly can," the youngster shot back quickly, almost defiantly.

So New York roared on with that spirit. It pioneered here and settlers spread it west of the Mississippi, to every State, and out of it came the solidification of the greatest democracy in both hemispheres.

Bob tipped the youngster handsomely and the shine in his eyes was greater than the shine on Durante's shoes. A little gesture like this is a whistling way to start off a morning, you feel so good beneath your skin and everyone you meet is a jolly good fellow.

Bob got under the wire for the initial performance at Radio City Music Hall, the greatest theatre on this planet, having the largest seating capacity of any cinema house in the world—the ability to seat 6,200 people most comfortably. This showplace of the nation was a masterpiece in construction, even a tribute to Rockefeller Centre. Durante marvelled at the thickly carpetted lobbies, marvellous staircases to the mezzanines and that colossal interior of the theatre itself. It was a wonder how this half-cylindrical ceiling could be sustained without pillar ing.

On the largest screen in the universe, Greer Garson and Walter Pidgeon, Radio City's favourite stars, dramatised the life of "Madame Curie," one of the great motion pictures of the year. On the stage, "Good Cheer," a colourful spectacle produced by Leonidoff,

featuring the Rockettes, Corps de Ballet and the symphony orchestra, was a remarkable production. The stage technicians are to be lauded for the effects they can attain on these movable stages, unbelievable unless seen. Spotlighting means the difference between a mediocre and super-sensational show and those dazzling lights from that lofty ceiling had a most creative touch. Bob Durante left this three-hour show almost in a daze; he thought the heavens had been opened to him. That presentation was too good to be a human actuality. He finally awoke from his emotional lethargy, ate at Jack Dempsey's restaurant, then found a taxi to whisk him away to Yankee Stadium.

"How far is it, driver?" Bob asked. He hardly believed the cabbie when he said it was 110 blocks. Sure he had ridden by it with Mr. Jones, but they hadn't been counting the blocks. The taxi drivers in New York are friendly and usually much valuable information can be squeezed out of them, if you press hard enough. They know how the Dodgers or the Yanks are doing, they can even tell you how the presidential election will turn out. They can take you to the farthest reaches of Long Island with an uncanny right street sense; they know all the short cuts.

"Here you are, mister," the driver flippantly said, and Bob got off under an overhead car line. Some kids were playing outside the Bronx park, pegging a ball around, even though it was January. Bob approached them with,

"Do you fellows know if a guy can get into the Stadium today?"

"Naw," voiced a fourteen-year-old, who had curly,

unruly hair, "this is the off season. There hasn't been a thing doing here since the last football game."

"But isn't there some way you can see the playing field and bleachers?"

"Say now," eagerly shouted a good-looking youngster to the rest of his pals, "we can take him up to the roof of that apartment house where we watch some of the games in summer." So Bob joined the youthful parade, who had taken a liking to him, to this vantage point. The insides of Ruppert Stadium could be seen very well, that expensive playing diamond and enough seats to house the world's largest baseball crowds.

Bob still wasn't satisfied, so he suggested to the kids, "There aren't any ground-keepers around now, let's all go down and try to get on the field."

Sure enough, they gained entrance and these enthusiastic kids began to heave a ball around. There were some likely looking ball players amongst them and their eyes sparkled as they participated in America's national pastime. Suddenly Bob removed his coat and ran out into the field. The kids slapped him on the back and yelled "solid." He had the thrill of a lifetime shagging flies on the same spot where Joe DiMaggio ran spectacularly for miles, chasing a sinking liner. Hadn't the invincible Ruth, the great bambino, also sweated out here? Then Bob patrolled the infield where the immortal, nationally-loved hero, Lou Gehrig, performed. Bob shifted to Joe Gordon's keystone sack and tried to snatch hot rollers in Flash Gordon's stabbing, back-handed style. Yes, this diamond was where American tradition lived.

This afternoon wasn't spent in exciting Manhattan, but this was one of Bob's greatest moments in New York. He left the kids and threw over his shoulder, "See you in Yankee Stadium in a couple of years."

Now, it was necessary for the Canuck to find the remainder of his pilot pals, and he eventually did at their hotel room. There we compared the day's entertainments and planned for the evening.

"A must on our schedule for tonight is Lucky Strike's Saturday Hit Parade," intimated McDonald stentorianly. "We also have to go up to that officers' club they have at the Del Monico. That's where all those beautiful debs. keep themselves."

"That will be a swell evening," encouraged Bob, "Well, let's hail a cab and get over to the C.B.S. studios for the Swoonatra half hour."

On arrival, the boys noticed that hundreds of youths jammed and clustered near the studio entrance. There was tension, juvenile vibrancy in that crowd; everyone babbled and chattered seemingly nonsensically. The main topic was embodied in one seventeen-year-old's remark, "Do you know who the foremost gentleman in the land is?" she asked, and without waiting for a suitable, obvious reply, blurted—"Franklin D. Sinatra."

This was the elaine mob we joined and even our blood temperatures soared. But much of this exhilaration ceased when it was sorrowfully announced that Frank Sinatra was in Hollywood at the moment looking after his cinematic career, hence he would not appear on the Lucky Strike programme tonight. It seemed that the audience would commit something drastic, for

all the throbbing teen-agers oh'ed and sighed dejectedly. Then they revived slightly from their remorsement, when it was further announced by an understanding, sympathetic commentator, that Sinatra would be heard, for he would be singing in studios on the other side of the continent.

Again Mark Warnow was a musical magician on the L.S.M.F.T. programme and the advertising rhetoricians possessed gifted voices. Joan Edwards, esquirally gowned, seemed to be a female Sinatra and believe it or not, in Ripleytorial fashion, men-folk swooned! And others, the wolves, whistled, hooted and generally behaved like creatures from the dinosaurial age; an American exhibition of modern living! Finally, it was the girls' turn to exhale their pent-up ecstasy, for their ideal, the one and only Sinatra was heard, because of rapid studio synchronising adaptations. Mark Warnow turned from his conductor's pedestal and watched these youngsters. He stood with his hands on his hips, peered at these hepcats. They were entirely oblivious of him, of earthial personalities, for they caressingly fondled each other's shoulders, cooed, gazed star-eyed to complete a picture of supposed serene contentment. Medical authorities diagnosed this exhibitionism as neurotic and psychosic, sprung from the natural maternal instinct to mother someone. This hero-worshipping show should not be missed by anyone contemplating a visit to New York City—it's great!

Emotionally satisfied, the rug-cutters and sentimentalists poured out of the studio at the conclusion of that half-hour of blissfulness.

Andy Hebert got into the mood and joked, "I can see why Sinatra's so popular—he's so frank!"

"That smells," gasped Frank Allen, "but fellows, you can see how motivating the human voice can be. All great leaders entrance their audiences by speech, and Sinatra is no exception. His mellifluous voice whispers to you and every girl in the nation thinks that he is singing especially to her."

"Did you hear that guy who sat back of us?" asked Andy. "When Sinatra came on, he said, 'Hooray for Crosby!'"

During all this mimicking, the boys and I edged nearer to our hotel, so we dashed up to our sleeping quarters for last minute readjustments before the Del Monico affair and to practise favourite smiles. Grooming finished, we found that the doorman had a cab ready for us, so we rode to Del Monico's officer club. Our excess garments were checked at a booth, where two hostesses did honours, smiling welcomes.

"Boy, I'm going to like this place," gleefully said the handsome one of our party, Durante. He had seen a few of the junior hostesses for the night. "Isn't this just too comfortable; down here they have a lounge bar and on the next floor you can dance in the ballroom."

Entering the ballroom annex, we Commonwealth fliers were introduced to a few debutantes. We proved a popular contribution to the gathering and our blue suits were a little on the conspicuous side, even though we ourselves envied the uniforms of the American Air Forces and the Free French fliers who had black uniforms with gold trimmings.

We were quickly paired off, each of us drawing most attractive partners. The orchestra began with a waltz and we breathed slightly easier, for we didn't

exactly know how to treat a New York dancer who was most probably influenced by some new style that we knew nothing about. But we were being Americanised slowly and Andy Hebert, the Yank, tried to show us the Manhattan technique of dealing with the feminine sex. He was overheard to say in a gag used a thousand times.

" You remind me of my sister," he flatteringly said to his pretty, brunette partner.

" Goodness, do I really?" she dubiously replied as if she half-believed such a casual remark.

" Yeah, I want to be brotherly to you," Hebert confidently smiled.

We never noted what success Andy had with this patter, but we did observe the couple two minutes later and they certainly were not waltzing with ten inches of open air between them.

We got away to ourselves for a moment and Frank Allen bravely announced, " I'll show you chaps how an Englishman does it; but jolly well good! He strode over to a talkative redhead who was surrounded by three Marines, excused his intrusion and asked her politely for a dance.

" I'd be delighted," she acknowledged with a Pepsodent smile and that was one time that the Marines lost a BLeach-head ! An attractive smile seemed to be one of the requisites of desired hostessing and most of these young girls had it.

" Do you find our American girls gay and easy on the eyes?" Frank's chattering partner inquired.

"Sure, they are, but good, old London is the only place in the world where you can picc-a-dilly!" They continued to laugh and really got along famously for the rest of the foxtrot. An Englishman seems to intrigue the American female with his unapproachable well-behaved manner, his finesse in etiquette and charming conversational methods.

It was inevitable—the orchestra got hot! You'd think these gowned girls would trip, but they sustained their equilibrium perfectly. Rus McDonald's jiving accomplice asked him, in between kicks.

"Do you like jitterbugging?"

"No," he quickly breathed and then shot back, "but I sure love holding you while you do."

Then came the rhumba. You remove all false teeth for this dance and any spare change before attempting it. The front of you moves along nice and smooth like a Spitfire, but the back of you makes as if you had just sat on a beehive!

Sonny Lark, the Australian, who was hanging desperately on to his partner, was told by her, "I bet nothing in Australia hops around like this."

"Lady, have you ever heard of our kangaroo?" he shook out.

A new dance craze was sweeping the nation, so girls eagerly jumped at the chance to teach us the samba. It certainly turned into a gay party for us and the entire jovial crowd roared with laughter when we rhythmed to the samba.

It was Viennese waltz time, so Andy Hebert edged over to a vivacious blonde, whom he had been eyeing all night. She wore a beautiful strapless gown, the kind with the invisible means of support, and pinned to her waist was a lovely corsage of deep, red roses. Her long, glowing hair fell on her well-rounded shoulders and her eyes were the type that seemed to say, speak to me. She fitted into Andy's strong arms, with the top of her perfumey hair tickling Andy's face. They seemed lost in the ballroom, Blue Danube atmosphere and when they parted for a few, brief seconds, Hebert managed to say, " You do my eyes a favour." That brought them together again and they whirled away on a floor of clouds. Strange as it seems, Andy hung on to his friend for the next dance—a demanded-for square dance!

At one of the callings, the officers had to pick up their girls and struggle dancingly for a minute. Andy lifted his light, attractive partner and proceeded along rather violently, in a bouncing step. To restrain from falling Beverly LaPlanche held on to Andy's neck with her soft, delicate arms and laid her head on his shoulder. Guess what? Andy kept bouncing!

Again, I'm insistent that the New York girl will do anything to gain recognition. To spice up the dancing programme, an M.C. asked for volunteers to demonstrate various dance steps. At other halls, the girls would have been timid, shy and would generally lack confidence to show their talents, but here, about one hundred girls, so it seemed, jumped at the opportunity, even feeling disappointed that they were not the chosen few.

The gang and I spent a lovely evening. We even received invitations to attend teas at some Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue residences. We were flattered by the courtesy and attention rendered us and when we were once more bedded in our hotel rooms, talk of having the greatest time of our lives was heard.

Sunday dawned, not peaceful and tranquil like other small towns, but roaring, commanding and throbbing, just like any other non-Sabbath day in New York City. One or two of the gang joined other religious New Yorkers in prayer book recitals, but Andy and I went to St. Patrick's Cathedral for Mass, not because it was a mortal transgression against the will of the Almighty not to attend; we attended because we loved our religion and firmly believed in everything embodied in the Credo.

After the universal "Ite, Missa Est," we two churchgoers joined the remnant of our crew, then ate a hearty meal for we were going to ferry around New York Harbour. The taxi driver got the party and me hastily to the Staten Island Ferry Base, for he knew of a short cut by "Williamsboig" bridge.

It was breezy and chilly on the Staten Island Ferry, but we held our position aboard to watch a skyline, a magnificent skyline, stupendous in scope, with some exaggerated points that were almost enveloped in a low strato-cumulus layer. We fliers quit gaping at lower Manhattan, walked around to the starboard promenade and looked out to Bedloe's Island, the home of the Statue of Liberty. Presented by the French Government to American liberty-lovers, the tremendous torch, 305 feet above the waterline, seemed to telegraph to

you a message that France would one day again be free. There were many ships in dock, many entering the enormous harbour and many leaving, presumably convoy bound. Little tugs puttered here and there, dirty, small, but very important at the water front. On the return journey, Andy, Frank and Rus kept their eyes centred on Brooklyn as if they expected a Dodger to hail them from Flatbush.

That bout with the sea air called for a bit of entertainment, so we eventually wound up at the Capitol Theatre. Spencer Tracy and Irene Dunne starred in "A Guy Named Joe," the greatest air saga since "Test Pilot." Kathryn Grayson headlined the in-person show, which also boasted of Rags Ragland, the comic, and Nancy Walker, the boogie-woogie vocalist. Richard Himber provided the music for the show, but the heralded, extra special added attraction was Lou Holtz. Again the hit songs were sung by the songbirds and New York still seemed to be wild about a catchy tune called "Besame Mucho." Sunny Skylar composed and wrote the lyrics to this popular tune a few years ago, but only now had it come to be known as a best-selling disc. "Besame Mucho" are, as everyone knows, a couple of Mexican words meaning "kiss me much"—that alone would sell the song. Once more, our entire group stopped in at Dempsey's for supper when we left the Capitol.

We had tickets for Fred Allen's Sunday Show, so off to the C.B.S. studios it was after eating. Before the show began, Allen appeared and got the audience in a laughable mood by wittily telling some jokes, half of them about Jack Benny, of "Love and Bloom" fame. Then the "On The Air" signal was given to a quickly-

hushed cast and for the next thirty minutes everyone had a riotous time. Fred was great in his dead-pan manner, and it was easy to see why thousands of radio fans demanded that he return to the air waves after his voluntary retirement. Portland Hofla skipped out to do her bit, hailing the old maestro with the familiar, piercing, "Oh! Mr. Allen." Radio audiences who only listened to her broadcast voice imagined Portland to be anything but pretty, but disguised voices are deceptive, for Allen's wife was very pretty. Jimmy Durante, the guest star of the programme, nosed his way into the studio sanctuary to do a complete comedy play with Allen. Jimmy almost rolled many of the audience into the aisles, for with his boisterous, slangy expressions and funny songs, Durante is a wow! He puts everything he has into his performance. Yes, we found Allen's show to be about the best in New York City—at least, we proclaimed it so as we walked out.

Before we retired for the evening, we stepped into the Astor Theatre to catch a late showing of John Steinbeck's "Lifeboat." Reviewers and critics thought it was the most tense, provocative, vital and exciting drama of the new year, and the boys and I agreed after we had seen Tallulah Bankhead top all her former theatrical roles by this fine performance.

Next day we trotted over to Loew's State for Red Skelton's new film and Earl Carroll's Vanities. The in-person show was good, for who could flaunt or ignore a show with the prettiest girls on Broadway going through dancing routines. Once more braving the light of the outdoors, we fliers wanted to see Harlem, so we grabbed a taxi to that section, even though warned to stay clear of it.

"Look at that kid!" yelled Andy, and he pointed at a young coloured boy who wore roller skates and who clung to a speeding truck. It was adventure and excitement for him, but he didn't seem to realise the danger involved when he would let go to shoot into traffic. There were many piccaninnies on the street, playing gleefully, who scarcely noticed accelerating traffic. But that was life in Harlem: a child had to be individualistic—he or she had to think quickly to avoid catastrophes, and in this manner a youngster grew to be an adult who could take care of himself under the most extenuating circumstances. Down-town Manhattan was only fifty blocks distant, so metropolitan and ultra-modern in its construction; yet Harlem was dirty, small shops appeared to be dilapidated, and in all it had a "casbas" appearance. But, beyond this exterior dinginess, the people behaved like any other Americans.

"See that bootblack over there?" Bob queried. "He dances around those shoes and he's got a smile that goes with each pat of his brush. You know, no matter how difficult the world is to a negro, he can always find time to show his beautifully white, pearly teeth in a big smile. If only more people could see over misfortune that way, they would live happy lives."

Spending the afternoon in Harlem called for a good rest, and rest we did, until an evening hour, when we departed for the Park Central Hotel. Once there, we were elevated to the top storey, where ritzy Coconut Grove commanded night clubbers' attention. We fliers did the usual—enjoyed a floor show, drank a few rounds, danced, dined and had our pictures taken by a

roving photographer. Then, tiring of this atmosphere, we took a thrill subway ride to Brooklyn. Those subterranean tunnels, with complete underground depots, ran beneath New York City for countless miles. It was a miracle that the city didn't cave in and crush the five million people who rode the underground trains each day. Frank Allen had a word about the underground railway.

"In London the subways are much better. You get faster service. There's none of this 'waiting for passengers' business and the ride is more rapid. You also get a smoother ride . . . none of this jaggedness. Well, let's catch a return train to lower Manhattan and spend the rest of the young evening at a show. The night's still a pup—none of us is dog-tired."

Having decided on the Palace as the theatre, we found that Frank Sinatra was starring in his initial major role, in a picture called "Higher and Higher." Sinatra appeal was terrific even on the screen, and hundreds of more-adult fans laughed at girls clinging to balcony seats and shrieking. These girls behaved like children at a Saturday matinee of a Western thriller . . . another story of Hollywoodisation—that of giving a national idol top billing while he was still hot. It was the final showing of the night, so we British Empire lads sought the solace of our pillows.

Rus McDonald muttered the last words of the night from under a sheet that was half stuffed in his mouth: "Sinatra's good," he slushed, "but Crosby—there's the guy—he's an American institution, for he'll never be replaced."

In the morning, Rus McDonald pulled aside the window curtains to let the sun peep in and cast its vitamised beam in a slumbering room. Rus yelled, and his sleepy pals parted eyelids that wanted to cling together.

"What did you do that for?" grumbled Andy Hebert, "just when I was dreaming of a beautiful, winged girl.

"Winged girl?" snickered the playful Durante.

"Yeah! This is the way it began. I dreamt I was flying a Spitfire, elliptical wings, streamlined fuselage, one of those 400-plus jobs. The operations room intelligencers briefed me for a stab at some enemy fighters. Well, I jumped into my Spit and soared to 30,000 feet, then queer things began to happen. Out of a dense bank of cirrus, a girl with wings floated towards me, just like a graceful, gliding seagull. She was the most beautiful creature I have even seen, with thready, golden hair that you'd just love to run your fingers through; eyes that centred on you like two anti-aircraft spotlights, and a full, kissable mouth. She winged over and sat gingerly on my wing-tip, mind you, then above the roar of my Merlin I could hear her say, in a sweet voice, "Andy, I like you. I want to show you wonders that you have never seen—wonders in my spaceless garden where we can walk alone under apple blossoms, frolic amongst rhododendrons, budding tulips and blooming hydrangea. Come, follow me," she commanded . . . and flew off, for me to follow. Then, then I . . ."

"Go on, you fool," shouted three eager voices.
"What did you do next?"

"I can't tell you," smiled Andy, "that's when Rus woke me up." Andy had to duck quickly, for nearly half-a-dozen pillows whistled in the direction of his head.

Each of us lazily dressed, shone our brass buttons and Vitalised or Brylcreemed our hair before stepping out of the hotel. We wanted some exercise, so we patrolled Fifth Avenue and gazed into shop display windows. At a fancy jeweller's shop, Rus McDonald pressed his nose against a window to read the price of a diamond ring.

"Whew!" he sputtered. "That flimsy little thing only costs \$3,000. Go in and buy it Rus—a very nice gift for the girl friend!"

Our garrulous group turned a corner to pound the pavement of the greatest theatre street in the world—Forty-Second Street. It seemed that every third building was a cinema house, and each theatre claimed it was projecting the finest picture in New York. Such words as "starific," "sizzling," "suspension," "star-colossal," "glorious Technicolor" and other eye-catching phrases were painted on lobby bill-boards in exclamatory manner.

"There are no such words in H'lywood's dictionaries and thesauruses as 'good,' 'fair,' or 'excellent'; everything is grotesquely stupendous," claimed Frank Allen. "Someone asked a Los Angeles producer how business was, and he replied, "It's colossal, but it's improving!"

Being show conscious again, we walked slowly up Broadway and purchased admission tickets at the Hollywood Playhouse. Dennis Morgan and Irene Manning were attracting crowds for their brilliant technicolor performances in a revived film, "The Desert Song." From here we went straight to the Tivoli Theatre, for we wanted to see as many first-run performances as possible, for our exciting holiday in the Wonder City was drawing to a close. Here at the Rivoli, Empire City columnists were pronouncing "The Song Of Bernadette" as the film achievement of the year, and other critics were hailing it as the greatest religious picture Hollywood ever made. Usually, a good religious film has this conquering success, and Franz Werfel's much-discussed novel gave this thought and theory authenticity.

Jennifer Jones, as saintly Bernadette Soubirous, made the miraculous tale of Lourdes live once more with a captivating freshness, simplicity and dogmatic pleasantness. For her remarkable, scintillating portraiture, she won the Academy award for 1943 and once more a star was born, to ubiquitous Twentieth Century Fox. In youth, Bernadette's thinking power is thought to be negligible by teachers of catechism, because she doesn't even know what the Blessed Trinity is. But to this simple Catholic girl with a heart filled with love for the Blessed Virgin, a beautiful Lady has recourse with her. Parishioners jeer Bernadette for her stupidity when she claims she has seen this wonderful apparition, even ones of the secular orders try to make Bernadette deny that this Lady said she was the Immaculate Conception. But hundreds of the faithful are not so sceptical; countless pilgrimagers

come to the shrine at Lourdes where Bernadette has unearthed a spring in the Grotto and the water from this miraculous spring has cured many disablements, even an acute case of dreaded paralysis. The town councillors condemn this magic fount and issue a proclamation saying that anyone who wilfully touches the omnipotent water will be punished severely. Bernadette is sent to a convent to become a sister, where she eventually dies. Papacy dignitaries probe into her life, unearthing the minutest details, because her life must be unblenished if canonisation ceremonies are to be performed. Yes, we thought it was a great picture; an exposition of saintly realism captivated us as we left the theatre.

For the second time we were undecided. At supper we talked about entertainment for the night. Hebert persistently suggested that we see the Sonja Henie show and not postpone it for another day. Lark, McDonald, Durante and Franks were insistent about going to Fred Wareing's broadcast.

We should have voted, for we had the necessary quorum, but everyone is entitled to the type of entertainment he wants to choose, so Hebert and I went to Madison Square Gardens and the others departed for "Pleasuretime." Within ten minutes we were on the sidewalk alongside Manhattan's sporting indoor arena. At one of the wickets we plunked down \$3.30 for non-reserved seats and then were ushered into this huge stadium.

Andy and I were directed to our numbered seats and we found that we had an excellent view of the ice

surface, but even the top balcony occupants had good views, for no pillars obstructed the path of vision. Slowly the people started dribbling in for Sonja Henie's icetraganza—the ice show of the century. After purchasing a souvenir programme, Hebert said:

"It's just like being at a circus when you're in the Gardens. There's always someone selling you either a programme, a chocolate bar, a bag of peanuts or some ice cream. Fifteen minutes ago these attendants shouted that they were positively selling the last bag of peanuts before the show started, but they are still yelling the same words. What salesmanship!"

The crowd swelled now; the management was assured of another capacity house, making Henie the top drawing card in Garden history.

The show was wonderful! Hebert and I thought it was the finest show we had seen in our lives, and certainly the most spectacular ice revue of all time. Gorgeously, magnificently costumed girls skated on a solidified ice surface to the accompaniment of a great orchestra in breath-taking precision. They skated faultlessly, turned in circles, wove in and out, but always in perfect timing.

"Look!" Hebert nudged me when that particular act was finished. He pointed to two American flags and said, "I think that's great!" On a lofty flagpole, the two American flags were flying in a breeze created artificially for the purpose. A spotlight was turned on the two crossed flapping flags and, in the semi-darkness, it was really an inspiring sight.

In this Arthur Wirtz production, the talented Carley Sisters did a skating act which called for rhythmic unison. All their turns, body movements and fast break-aways were performed in perfect concord—a great skating act.

It's remarkable how pleasing a skating carnival can be, and usually the womenfolk wouldn't dare miss a performance. Joe Walters, the skating comedian, had everyone shedding tears of laughter, for he was tremendously funny in his antics. He would skate very speedily, then fling himself on a board of rollers, bumping along in agony and eventually regaining a standing position. Then he would dash at break-neck speeds and nonchalantly miss obstacles by infinitesimal distances, even dashing at a wall and quickly manoeuvring away from it. He could stop on a dime, and the crowd roared when he evaded pursuers by this method. At full flight Joe would jump over the four footboards and eagerly sit on a spectator's knee. Andy couldn't blame him for this mad escapade, for it was a pretty girl spectator. Walters was encored several times for his likeable comedy.

Sonja Henie skated right into the spectators' hearts in her appealing acts, honestly America's sweetheart. This Norwegian skater had won more than 400 trophies in competing with world-famous figure skaters. Her success didn't stop there, for she went on to film-dom to become a leading box office attraction. Sonja was beautiful—the perfect example of the outdoor girl, who has naturally rosy cheeks combined with the best of health. In her probationary years she had practised diligently, fatiguingly, but from that toil came this

triumphant result. The people never tired of her effortless movements; they clamoured for more and more of her free skating style. Miss Henie's most successful number was a Hawaiian act, in which she swayed in true hula fashion. Hebert and I had never seen such grace and rhythm, even on stage shows, but Sonja was going through these difficult movements on skates! Onlookers thought they were on the sands of Waikiki, Miss Henie was that rhythmically sensational.

In another act she had a skating partner, Burford McCusker, but the crowd had eyes only for Sonja, the skating queen of the world! She was even more attractive when spotlights of pretty colours pierced the semi-darkness to light her way. To watch this resplendent display of spotlighting is a performance in itself, for the beams are focused from the lofty ceiling of Madison Square Gardens.

The crowd hated to leave after the grand finale, Andy and myself being the worst lingering offenders. We just stared into space, as if suffering from some dilemma or an occipital contusion. The show had been too magnificent. Hebert seized himself from his quandary and poked me: "Come on—we have to get out of here, or soon the New York Rangers will be taking the ice for their hockey match," he said in exaggeration. "We can beat it back to the hotel and see how the others fared at Fred Wareing's radio programme."

We found out that the others had thought a lot of the broadcast, and it seemed that you couldn't be disappointed in any Empire City performances. Controversial discussion ceased, some of us fell asleep, but

Hebert still mumbled, raved on, saying in a half-asleep voice: "Sonja—you're wonderful!"

When we peeped from under covers in the morning and stretched tired legs, Rus McDonald balanced himself on one elbow and said: "Gosh, we have only a day and a half in New York, and we still have to go to the legitimate theatre. We've been so busy running around that we've just overlooked the 'in the flesh' plays. Some of the best shows advertised in the 'Herald Tribune' are 'Oklahoma,' that's a talk-of-the-nation musical; 'One Touch Of Venus,' another fine musical; 'Othello,' Paul Robeson's great show; 'Arsenic And Old Lace,' in its fourth year on Broadway; Helen Hayes in 'Harriet'; 'Angel Street'; 'The Merry Widow'; 'The Doughgirls'; 'The Voice Of The Turtle'; 'Tomorrow The World'; 'Carmen Jones' and scores of others. We'll go scouting for tickets this afternoon."

The apres-midi finally houred its way in and the boys found how difficult it was to secure good theatre admission tickets. For example, seats to the musical, "Oklahoma," were reserved for four months in advance! Frank Allen had been somewhat fortunate, for a most magnanimous scalper had sold him a ticket to that song and dance show for \$15. Bob Durante and I managed to purchase tickets to "One Touch Of Venus" and the others got ducats for the Billy Rose play, "Carmen Jones."

Having completed these furtive searches, we enjoyed some escapist minutes at Radio City and once more at the outdoor artificial rink. By this slight deviation we had evicted ourselves from the dejectedness of that ticket-buying spree; our spirits were lifted,

we smiled again—anyhow, it took twice as many facial muscles to frown. We had our evening meal at Barney's Grill, where they advertised the best steaks in the city. Being famished, we pounced eagerly, gastronomically, on to the tenderloins, and were completely engrossed with our late supper. While the others continued to sit around, Hebert and I left for the "One Touch Of Venus" play.

It was a very good musical, second to "Oklahoma," of course, but otherwise highly entertaining. Mary Martin, the pretty, statuesque Venus, comes to life to entirely entrance Kenny Baker with her loveliness and magicianial attributes. John Boles, as a modern art connoisseur, comes into the life of these two lovers, to provide complicating issues. Dancing sensation of the show was the much-talked-of Sono Osato.

The singing in the show was on the superlative side, for Kurt Weill's music is genuinely soothing, relaxing. Kenny Baker sings well with Miss Martin the "Wooden Wedding Song," and Mary makes a hit with a great tune, "Speak Low." She also sings intimately "That's Him," which hasn't enjoyed as much juke box or record success as "Speak Low."

On leaving the Imperial, Andy said, "You can bet that 'Speak Low' will be one of the leaders on the hit parade very soon."

"Yeah, it should be," I agreed, while we elbowed our way through a theatre portal, "and it's not often that you see a musical with not only one, but three, top-notch singing stars. You know, with those exquisitely-cut gowns that Mary Martin draped herself, she almost did look like the real, beautiful, mediaeval

Venus that everyone recalls. Isn't that Kenny Baker a killer, though? He looked so boyish and yet so handsome. A lot of these Manhattan girls delight in each stage smile of his."

Our air party gathered at the hotel suite for a last night in New York City. We prepared for a good night's rest, for it was a long, tedious ride back to New Brunswick, back to reality, for we had lived in a land of make-believe for a fortnight.

"We've had it," philosophised Frank Allen. "Yep. we must get back or those S.P.s will be crawling on our carcasses."

Bob struck a new vein and said, "It has been wonderful—we've had the time of our lives, seen some of the greatness in this world, lived like true New Yorkers. After all this dazzle and superlativeness, Pennfield Ridge will seem like a dungeon on Napoleon's island of Elba."

Outside of the above, we showed little garrulosity that night, and soon heavy eyelids overcame optical muscles.

Awakening lingeringly, and detesting the thought of leaving such a Wonder City, it was difficult for the fliers to start for beckoning Grand Central Terminal, but it was necessary. We caught the next train for Boston, still feeling a bit unhappy about our predicament as we were propelled from the depot.

In a sulking note, Rus quietly spoke, "Farewell, O city of splendour and promise . . ."

CHAPTER SEVEN

UPON arriving in St. John, a bus was boarded and immediately we were on our way to No. 34 Operational Training Unit, where our air-work would begin on the following day. The bus drew up on camp ground and we alighted to walk hastily over to our barrack block, where we unpacked our travelling bags and admired New York souvenirs.

The following day the entire new course was stirred from its lethargy, and study began in earnest. This new influx of men was numerically listed as Course 30, with a complement of approximately fifty members of air crew. There were thirteen pilots in this course, and each of them chose or was assigned a navigator, a wireless/air-gunner and a straight air-gunner. The pilot is captain of the crew, has the authority, but it was stressed didactically that this flying unit was a co-operative one—one that strongly emphasises team-work for successful functioning. The initial two weeks would be devoted succinctly to ground-work. In this time the pilot would acquaint himself with a Ventura and the other members would study their particular compartments of this Vega aircraft. Hours of practice would be spent in the synthetic training building, where an actual Ventura had been installed. Yes, the "taxi-driver," as a pilot is usually affectionately known, would know his cockpit drills blindfolded, and have all necessary gen stowed in his cerebrum before he could even put his foot in an expen-

sive, heavier-than-air machine. Those other important members of a crew would plod through newer phases of ground schooling in navigation, wireless, gunnery, meteorology and intelligence, besides the aforementioned.

That night, in the mess, Pilot Officer Jack Cornett, a member of 30 Course, sat down in an easy chair and carefully scrutinised his new buddies, his instructors. New faces always proved fascinating and, in a glance, characters are often appraised, peculiarities noted, and in such a rapid calculating manner you can tell whether or not you're going to like a fellow.

Most of these instructors and staff personnel were heroes of World War II, the original Battle of Britain heroes, for quite a few of them wore decorations—valour indicators. Jack Cornett found it extremely difficult to pry any information out of these fellows. No one wanted to gab about battles or be cohorts of braggadism. The usual answer was, "Oh, they lined us up one day for decorations and I happened to be in line."

Even though these men were particularly modest, it was whispered around the mess that Squadron-leader Potts had won the D.F.C. for a great flying feat. He had brought a Vickers' Wellington bomber home on one engine from German territory.

"You can bet a silver dollar," Johnny Cline said to Cornett, "that the R.A.F. earn their medals. There's always superfluous talk about the cheap way that some guy has been decorated, and how some heroic person was overlooked when the medals were being given out.

Remember that ridiculous story of how a Yank got the Purple Heart? It is said that an American, after seeing a war movie, where blood flowed freely, was seen to pin the Purple Heart on himself. Yeah, you'll find that most soldiers belittle others' acts of heroism and are peeved that their own bravado has been overlooked."

Next day the pilots of this flight were tutoringly refreshed on dinghy drill and necessary action in case of forced landings on land. But all is not binding study on an air station, for after classes most of the course turned out for a hockey practice. A team would be selected from the more proficient to represent the station in challenge games with various teams in the surrounding military district.

After practice, MacEachern, Mayer and I learned that the Greenwood R.A.F. station wanted us to bolster their team in two exhibition games to be played that week-end. Greenwood sent over a Bolingbroke to transport us to their Nova Scotia base, so on the following morning the Bolingbroke was warmed up, we were put in its cramped body and soon the pilot was airborne, setting course across the Bay of Fundy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE "Boly," each aircraft is always christened some new nickname, not christened by champagne, of course, for almost all fliers would rather drink it; well, the "Boly" winged its way across the Bay at an indicated altitude of three thousand feet and the pilot avoided the path of any ships. Even in this comparatively safe zone, ships challenged aircraft by Aldis lamp. The English thalassocracy could never be too sure. With no flying duties to perform, we watched the turbulent sea. Even at this height large breakers could be seen to roll crushingly forward, capped with whiteness. Bay of Fundy is noted for its tidal bore, and Shep Mayer, who was in a larky mood, shouted over the drone of engines,

"I think the Bay is very neat and clean."

"What do you mean?" asked Bud MacEachern.

"Well, it's very tidy, isn't it?" He had to stave off friendly pushes, for we felt like throwing him overboard without his parachute.

MacEachern was exceptionally witty that morning too, and he yelled to Shep, "Mayer, you have nothing to fear if we did throw you overboard. None of these man-eating fish would touch you, for we'd paint on your scrawny chest, 'world's greatest lover,' and who would ever swallow that?"

Joking ceased as we made a landfall somewhere on the Nova Scotian coastline and soon the pilot throttled back to lose height, join the circuit at Greenwood aerodrome; he then turned cross-wind and finally made a turn into wind for a pancaking. The pilot taxied to Number One hangar, but just as he manoeuvred along the final taxi-strip, he caught his wing-tip against a wall, sheer carelessness that probably resulted from showing us air-novitiates that he was a "Second Bishop." We alighted, were then introduced to the chief flying instructor, who was also the coach of the hockey team.

"We can certainly use you fellows," welcomed the C.F.I. "Obviously we haven't much available talent on this English station, but we do hope to entertain some of the R.A.F. types with our national sport. Sport is fundamental in building morale, so the authorities encourage these matches. Come along with me and I'll fix you up with quarters and show you around our fine station."

We proceeded to our allotted rooms, where we sat down for a chat and rest. A few witticisms prevailed, then we sobered to agree that we liked Greenwood and this new province, to us, Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia really means New Scotland and Scotians take immense pride in the province's aged historical connections. Nova Scotia juts into the Atlantic and was long known to the intrepid, daring Norsemen who braved ocean water for adventure. Many early century explorers visited these coastlines and the first white settlement, north of the Gulf of Mexico, was made within these borders in 1605.

Colonising history was wrought here and this was the scene of constant skirmishes and antagonism between the English and French to see who would control the rich, new world. Appropriately, many great memorials, commemorating these conflicts, have been preserved and those two fortresses, Annapolis Royal and Louisbourg, have been maintained even to the extent of having shabbles restored. The memory of Acadians, who were the first settlers, is perpetuated by Evangeline Memorial Park. Vacationers who tread on Cape Breton soil, often walk by the site of John Cabot's landing, which was in the year 1497, just after Columbus's great nautical attempt. Yes, Nova Scotia is certainly extremely opulent in folklore and history.

This most easterly Canadian province is beautiful too. On folders it is advertised as the "sea-conditioned Province," and it justly merits that name, for no part of the province is more than 60 miles from the sea, so if you love a refreshing sea breeze, you will certainly love Nova Scotia! This ocean-flavoured peninsula has a unique sea position, and its 5,500-mile coastline, yes, over 5,000 miles of crookedness, shelters pretty coves where a holiday can be enjoyed and all the requisites for rest and recreation can be captured. In this Canadian "Shangrila," water sports can be found much more enjoyable, because the weather is so cool and refreshing, nursed to this climatic ideal by proximity to the sea. Fine beaches abound in those sheltered inlets, so the non-aquatic holidaymakers can loll in the sands and forget that there ever was a Wall Street cash crash. For the athletic bathers the water is continually warm, as the low tides and imperceptible, shelving beaches provide extra warmth.

And the fishing—well, one Nova Scotian told me

that the fish go about telling tales of how big a man they caught! Nowhere in the world can more successful angling of blue-fin tuna and broadbill swordfish be realised. Almost all the tuna records for both hemispheres have been made here, in waters lying off the Scotian mainland. This is a thrilling, exciting, deep sea sport, because you're tangling, not angling, with the "big stuff" (an author has to toss his own pun in once in a while, too). In these comparatively calm waters, the largest tuna ever caught by rod and line, a monster of 950 lbs., was captured by a Chicago sportsman. Of course, inland waters abound with the lesser fish, but a harpooning excursion is matchless for the thrill of a lifetime.

Let's step away from the sea for a moment—we may get our feet wet. Nature has endowed Nova Scotia, the interior, with beauty. The Cape Breton Highland Park is a spectacular mountain and valley region where scenic grandeur is superfluous. Nearby are the Bras D'Or Lakes, a salt lake region which is almost tideless, like the blue Mediterranean. The Louisbourg Historical Park contains reclaimed colonisation ruins which are of much interest to history seekers. Near Truro is Victoria Park, a small, beautiful, pleasure ground of deep ravines, pine-covered slopes, mediaeval rustic bridges and a singing waterfall. Photographical authorities claim that Nova Scotia possesses outstanding subjects for pictorial photography; each year, camera fiends and artists come to capture the quaintness, beauty and picturesque excellence that is manifest on the mainland.

Much of this information was gleaned from

MacEachern, who was a bona-fide Prince Edward Island citizen and propagandist of the Maritimes.

The C.F.I. appeared in our room and asked us if we would care to tour the camp. Agreeing to the proposal — after all, he was a squadron-leader! — we stepped out and proceeded to the officers' mess. It was a very fine lounging building, with a clandestine eating establishment, a lounge room where a huge fireplace warmed chilled Air Force members, and a games room bordering next to a choicely-stocked library. From here we were directed to the drill hall, which is one of the main features of any Commonwealth aerodrome. A group of decorators were laboriously working on installations for a Valentine dance. The hall was very pretty indeed, with hearts, cupids and colourful papers hanging in abundance from rafters. In the drill hall were the two Station Chapels, of Roman Catholic and Protestant denomination, a library, and the airmen's lounge. Not many flying schools could boast of having exclusive places of worship like those two fine chapels, a criterion of religious activity on the station. No matter what their creed, men always drew closer to God when there was a danger of parting with the sanctuary of this earth.

This operational school, which trained men for Mosquito squadrons, had eight hangars in all, constituting and embracing a vast area. Another interesting building was the synthetic training structure where a "Mozzy" was installed for teaching purposes; also, a shooting gallery and cinema retreat were added features. A large, snow-covered square of ground was the playing field, where English cricket and football matches were staged in summer, but now was flooded

for an outdoor rink. After this brief, rapid survey, our group sauntered over to the mess for an afternoon tea, which custom the R.A.F. had brought to the New World.

That night we three pilots joined the hockey team at the guard house and proceeded by omnibus to Annapolis Royal for a hockey contest. We were right in the heart of the Annapolis Valley orchard district, a region stretching from Windsor to Digby, a beautiful territory made famous by Longfellow's "Evangeline." During the apple blossom season, a short period from May 20th to June 5th, the valley is fragrantly lovely, an inspiring beauty scene that attracts thousands of tourists. To celebrate the colourful blossoming of the trees, and to stimulate interest in tourist trade travel by focusing attention on the apple industry of Nova Scotia, an annual Apple Blossom Festival is held. In true American custom, a pulchritudinous young girl is selected as the Blossom Queen, and Her Majesty has the title of Queen Annapolis. Thousands of onlookers assemble for this outstanding event and gala occasion, where pageantry, dancing and music predominate. Last year a Forces' girl won the distinguished title of Queen, a fine tribute to our regimented women. All these sequences and nostalgic atmospheres have been newsreeled to the world, carrying the story of the beautiful land of Evangeline.

Our quickly assimilated hockey team met a naval sextette and gave them a good battle, even though we were booed by the tars, who are the staunchest supporters on earth. Everyone was pleased with a good show, the customers' appetites were satisfied, so we motored back to Greenwood with a post-game glow.

On awakening, next morning, Mac and I were disturbed by Shep Mayer, who ran into the room saying, excitedly, "Hurry up and put your things on—the C.F.I. has just promised us a flip in a Mosquito. Each of us is supposed to get some dual instruction."

"What a stroke of luck!" MacEachern exclaimed, and his eyes lit up. "We'll be able to fly the world's fastest aircraft—the De Havilland plywood wonder! Let's get rolling!" In a few moments we dashed towards No. 1 hangar, where a couple of instructors awaited us, ready to acquaint us with a cockpit layout.

Making a survey and a familiarisation check of all flight instruments and appendages, the instructor asked us if we were all set.

"Sure. Let's scramble!" eagerly said Mayer. The three of us climbed into different Mozzies for an hour's dual work. Taxi-ing onto the proper runway, all kites were airborne in ten minutes. MacEachern's particular instructor, D.F.C. and bar, soared his aircraft to 1,300 feet and said over the intercommunication system, "Okay—you have control."

With a roger, MacEachern took control and found this aerodynamically-perfected aircraft manoeuvred wonderfully. It responded to the slightest touch, even at death-defying speeds. The instructor again took control, pressed forward on the stick, drove the Mozzy earthwards at over 400 m.p.h. and did a loop as easily as a trained acrobat. Continuing at bullet speeds, he tossed and rolled the aircraft about the air playfully. Silencing a hydromatic full-feathering propellor, the instructor gave Mac a great flying demonstration, by

showing him that the Mosquito was fully acrobatic on one engine! Mac had his strong arms on the control column once more, and he zoomed across apple tree tops like a streaking comet. Yes, this was a young man's thrill !

In time, the three planes ventured back to base, joined the circuit and went ahead with landing performances. My test pilot and I had scampered off the landing strip and were watching Shep Mayer and his instructor come in. His approach was decent, then, suddenly, he swerved to one side and hit the banked snow on the runway edge. The snow shot up in a beautiful spray, like Old Faithful spluttering his vehemence, and the Mozzy came to a smashing, splintering stop. Unbelievably, and very fortunately, Shep wasn't hurt. Yes, we were certainly relieved when we saw Mayer crawling from the tangled wreckage after his test pilot. Shep had been at the controls, and a cross-wind had caught him, to thrust the aircraft sideways and thus disastrously. The Mozzy was known to fly like a bird in the air, but on the ground it performed like a doped broncho. Soon, photos were taken, and much excitement was derived therefrom.

Here, because of this hockey excursion, Shep had pranged an aircraft worth nearly \$300,000. We told Shep, who was a former Toronto Maple Leaf N.H.L. player, that he would have to play nearly 70 years in that league to realise a sum like that.

That evening we were off to Middletown to play a demanded-for engagement with the sailors. Once more we journeyed through the Annapolis Valley, by large, comfortable homes that suggested that apple-growing was profitable. Again a great tussle was

experienced by both clubs, and this time we had a cheering section of air personnel.

We were supposed to return to Pennfield Ridge next day, but smirky weather had grounded all planes, and when the meteorologists saw no clearance of this fog for a few days, we were given railroad passage to Digby. We were then supposed to book passage on the s.s. Princess Helene, for a Bay voyage to St. John. But even Helene sailings were cancelled because of a rocky sea, so we proceeded back to Greenwood and informed them that we liked Nova Scotia. Our Pennfield Ridge C.O. radioed that we were to attend classes and not to frivol away our time. But our holiday of a Valentine party and leisure living was ended in two days. We boarded a Bolingbroke and flew to New Brunswick, to resume our course studies in keen manner.

CHAPTER NINE

FLYING was associated with this resumption of duties and, after two dual hours of instruction, we semi-capable Service Flying School graduates were permitted to solo. On our solo trip it was essential—and demanded by the flight rules—that we take a wireless operator along with us as a look-out, and because the emergency undercarriage operations could only be performed by two co-operating men—so they told us.

Jack Cornett did his first bumpy landing, then he turned to his wag and shouted, "What do you think of my first solo in these Vents.?"

"First solo!" his kidding wag screamed over the intercom. "Let me out of here!"

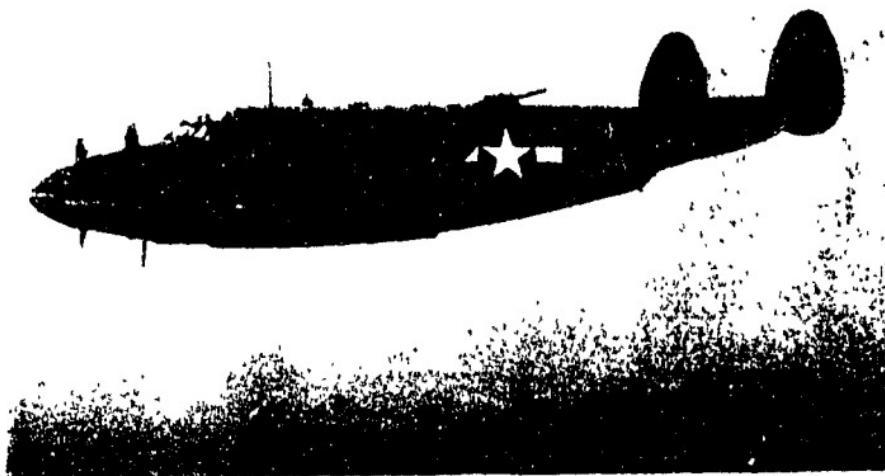
But there is only one real solo in a pilot's life—his first solo in an aircraft at an elementary school. It was pliant nature of a man with wings on his tunic to step into any aircraft and take off. Yes, that first solo in the elementary stages, when your dubious instructor said, "Okay, kid—she's yours!" . . . that was the best and biggest thrill. It was like being cowboy, mountie, baseball player, detective, all wrapped up into one exciting, breath-taking adventure. First solos in other planes were secondary thrills, for hadn't our instructors said, "Fly a Tiger Moth and you can fly any plane in the world!"

Here in conversion flight a pilot chose, very diligently, his own crew. Each captain tried to get a most efficient crew, because these would be the men on whom he would have to depend in the stress of aerial bombing and combat. The crew would make a by-word of co-operativeness, would work without prejudice and with unbiased unison, and this co-ordinated effort of humans would be directed like an instrument to further disintegrate Hitler's fortress Europe. Intelligence deemed it necessary that a Canadian pilot choose a Canadian crew, an Australian pilot an Aussie crew, and so on. Taking this internal precaution, there wouldn't be any prejudicistic attitudes or spasms of disagreement or non-conformance, so co-operativeness could be achieved to a still further excelling degree. Later on, in actual aerial warfare, I found this theory expounded, as I saw crews who had a different Commonwealth man in each aeronautical capacity.

I persisted to do things with my accustomed unorthodoxy in the selection of my crew. All pilots had chosen their navigators with a scrutinising discrepancy, but I seemed to put off this duty until, one day, the chief ground instructor called me into his office and told me that unless I hurry in my choice, they would pick someone for me. He suggested that I wasn't showing the necessary keenness in this matter. He showed me a list of available navigators and, to ease his concern over me, I thumbed my way down the list, and when I came to "O"—which corresponded to the first initial of my own name—I acted on a hunch and chose a fellow named Lloyd O'Neil. Crews were usually chosen after talks, but I chose my entire crew from this alphabetical prolegomenon. And the choices were most satisfactory.



O'NEIL MALKINSON GAGNE OBODIAC



VENTURA AT PENNFIELD

Pilot Officer O'Neil was my navigator-bomber, Flight-Sergeant Raymond Gagne was my wireless-operator, and Sergeant John Malkinson was my air-gunner.

When I met O'Neil I was immediately impressed and smiled inwardly that my screwy method of crew-selection hadn't worked out badly. He seemed to like me, too, for he said, "You're one of the first Air Force jokers to spell my name properly." O'Neil was tall, of slim appearance, and walked along as though nothing bothered him. He had bushy, light-brown hair, smiling blue eyes and the longest eyelashes you ever saw. Girls were wild about this 21-year-old youngster, and he always blushed pleasantly at their eagerness to trap him in this leap year. His blush was so renowned, in fact, that he was christened "Pinky." Yes, that smooth complexion of his looked well in that blushing hue. I resolved to go out of my way to befriend Pinky.

I liked Raymond Gagne, the wireless-operator, when he went out of his way to see what his pilot looked like. Using his French-Canadian dialectism, he concocted more new terms and phrases than did Webster. He called Pinky "O'Neel" and Malkinson "Juonnai," but that's what I liked. Each crew member had his own distinctive personality, and Gagne's could certainly not be imitated. Ray possessed jet-black hair and a meticulously looked-after moustache that he took pride in. "Makes me look like da Wing Commander," he said. One would swear that he was in the neighbourhood of 27 years, then he would astonish you by saying "J'ai vingtun ans." He tried to be as by-lingual as the Montreal radio. In the company of women he was perfectly at ease, and extremely confident of his masculinity in stirring the womanish heart. Gagne

explained that an American looks up to a woman, an Englishman looks for a woman, but a Frenchman looks at a woman. So that's the secret. I'll have to try it sometime. (By the way, I DID—then had to buy some beefsteak next day!). One must give Raymond a great deal of credit, for before he joined the R.C.A.F. he could not speak a word of English, being brought up in French Catholic schools; now he had graduated his course in English, which was indeed admirable. From him I wanted to learn how the French-Canadian mind functioned, so I listened heedfully every time he discoursed on a subject.

Malkinson was a youth approaching his nineteenth birthday anniversary, shy and unaccustomed to filling the arduous role of a man. He had an infectious grin and was very proud of his father, who was in the Army, serving in British Guiana. Johnny never failed to show me those fine British Guianan stamps on his dad's letters. I was sure that Johnny came from a very patriotic family, for at sixteen he left the adolescent atmosphere of High School to join the Army, but his youthfulness gave him away and the authorities discharged him. But patriotism surged in his heart once more: he volunteered for the Air Force, getting by the more gullible (as to age requirements) recruiting agents. I wanted Johnny to like me.

Here we were, four characters recruited from the different Provinces of the Dominion, who were supposed to have been part of "irresponsible youth." There wasn't one iota of similitude in us—we were of three religions, but in war such petty syncretisms were of inconsequence. We volunteered for an ulterior purpose: to rid this earth of the stain of Nazism and save civilisation itself !

CHAPTER TEN

THIS was the day of my first cross-country flight at Pennfield Ridge, a three-legged trip that would require nearly four hours to complete. We were aroused early for briefing, weather information, courses, emergency landing fields, radio ranges, places to be avoided — so we knew exactly what would be vexatious on our tracks. The meteorologist informed us that the occlusion which had caused the inclement weather had now passed, and his synoptic chart showed that an area of high pressure was approaching this region, conducive conditions for favourable weather.

Having garnered this necessary information, our crew set to work making out a flight plan, plotting essential courses, the calculation of ground speeds. Malkinson, our air-gunner, went over to the pigeon pens, for a homing bird was carried on each trip outside the confining zones of the air station. The homing pigeon was kept in a cage, and Johnny was given full instructions on how to drop the bird in case of ditching or forced landing on terra firma. Malkinson was told that the bird must be put in a paper bag provided for that purpose, then tossed clear of the aircraft with the S.O.S. message tied to the bird's leg. The pigeon was put in the bag for protection, as the powerful slip-stream of the aircraft would tear its feathers asunder, making futile the bird's efforts to fly.

Pinky picked up our bomb-site, then we boarded

the aircraft assigned to us and everything was in readiness for a dash around New Brunswick. Our engines were warmed, and by our Bendix radio we got taxi-clearance to proceed to the proper runway in use. We scrambled at our take-off time, overshot our first turning point, and Lloyd said, "Wouldn't it be funny if we got lost in Germany and had to call Berlin radio for routing?"

On the last leg we dropped practise bombs on the bombing range, which had men plotting our hits and misses. We pancaked and walked cumbrosomely, with all that equipment of an air flight, to the interrogation room. The navigation instructor thought O'Neil's air plot exercises a satisfactory start and his neat work was commendable.

That evening, after dinner, for which we dressed, we went over to the cinema house. An Englishman always dresses for dinner, even if he is in darkest Africa, and we had to follow suit. Well, we seated ourselves for the show, and this was our most popular form of recreational entertainment on this station. A most generous patronage was assured for the two diurnal performances, as there was little else, besides study, to do. Each evening there was a programme change, and this hall became a favourite meeting place for all air comrades. The Ridge was an operational training base, so it played the first-run pictures, which are shown with priority to the Armed Forces. That's how this isolated air station managed to show the finest in motion pictures as soon as, or sooner, than other metropolitan centres.

After an exciting day's work, movies can be so very

relaxing and can set a mind at ease. With the first soft note of music that was played before each performance, half of the day's tension would vanish. And in a huge gathering of men, with a few nursing sisters present, a spontaneous outburst of the jocose variety would set the entire house bubbling with mirth. Any attractive girl on the screen would always be applauded with whistles, and someone in the audience of men would always mimic a love scene.

Then, this being a Royal Air Force station, American sagas pictured on the screen were often ridiculed and laughed at, especially those portrayals that suggested the highly improbable and those which glorified the American fighting man. A gangling, swash-buckling Marine could always take care of fifty blood-thirsty Nipponese single-handed! English movies are more sedate, closer to actual life, so these exaggerations were uproariously laughed at, but I think that this rowdyism should have been restrained. I think that these Englishmen forgot that we Canadians were closer to the American mode of life, even though we were members of the Commonwealth of Nations.

One night a picture with an English theme was showing. It followed a serious trend; no snickering or the usual tomfoolery punctured the sober atmosphere. But one Canadian airman, during an intimate flower scene, couldn't suppress a giggle. The rose is the emblematic flower of England, and much loved by that country's gardening folk, so one officer shouted, "Keep quiet, you uneducated idiot!" That airman should have had a more ethical behaviour, but then, that English officer didn't behave with the decorum of a diplomat.

Usually, good fellowship was the medium at the cinema, and a clash was to be expected now and then; argumentative discussions helped cement the divergencies.

Next day our studies continued at the Synthetic Training Building, and this building housed wonders. Without getting into the air, a pupil could perform almost every duty of an aircrew member. Costly devices abounded for teaching aerial warfare.

In the main section of the huge building a Ventura was mounted on a stage, partially dismantled, weighing approximately 15,000 lbs. All familiarisation work was done here for the entire crew, and each member knew every stitch of the aircraft. In the same gigantic room, many gun turrets were mounted for air-gunners, who could acquire gunnery skill without firing a single round of ammunition ! Intrinsically mechanised, an overhead cable carried a miniature aircraft and this was used as a target for aiming purposes.

On the second floor was a fine theatre, where many subjects were taught the modern way. This way of receiving education was very popular with us, and at the smoking intermission the operator played popular recordings over the screen recording apparatus. Each Sunday night, a record recital was held here, and anything from Bach to boogie-woogie was played.

The bombing rooms were also munificently equipped, one room being used for general lectures, where the bomb-site was principally discussed. Another room contained bomb-operational components, such as mechanisms for the "universal carriers." All types of

bombs were on display, also pyrotechnics, flare chutes, dinghies. The room with the pilot's reflector sights was popular. On a screen, a rapidly-flying aircraft would be flashed. Your trigger impulse would be synchronised to the screen mechanism, thus showing accurately your yardage error by tabulation.

In the grope training room, a remarkable job of aero-simulation had been performed. A pupil could go on a three-hour cross-country tour over the Continent of Europe without ever climbing into an aircraft. By photographic skill, a miniature model, very precisely scaled, led one to believe that he was actually bombing some military objective in France. Imitating actual flight, the navigator made out a flight plan, which the pilot must obey, steering planned courses. To show you to what pains the experimenters had gone to get a note of authenticity, they had installed a tubal machine, costing \$25,000, to simulate the noise of aircraft engines!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THIS is a scene typical of any flight room around a hangar. All crew members lazily saunter over to their flight room and await flying orders for that particular day. A few jokes are traded; some of the aircrew are checking their parachutes, a few more-studious ones are reviewing their ground school work. Someone may start a card game, others kid their fellow Commonwealth members. Then, everything is dropped, for the Flight Commander has announced a schedule. One crew may go dual-flying, another may get some formation flying, another a shot at some low-flying exercises, bombing or instrument flying. Those that aren't included in the day's programme are sometimes shuffled off to link training, and they complain, "When are we ever going to get up in the air? Who wants to fly a link around?"

Another shouts, "Hey, fellows! What does an aeroplane look like?"

Cline answers, "I wouldn't know—it's a military secret."

"What are you squawking about, Muir?" asks Cornett. "I haven't been up in the air for so long that I've forgotten what colour the sky is!"

But let a fellow get a couple of hours in the air and he'll talk about it as though it were twenty hours over the Ruhr Valley!

Each pilot loved his low flying in formation exercises. An instructor would usually be in the lead aircraft of a box of three. Pupils would fly the two and three positions. This box would then fly the New Brunswick countryside and surrounding Bay of Fundy to their heart's content. The box would go scooting over tree-tops and interior lakes, and one pilot was known to have brought home an aerial stuck to his wing. Over the bay the best low flying would be seen, as the water usually made smooth atmospheric conditions, which made this type of flying not so dangerous. Over the sea the pilots always wanted to prove their skill, and would get down on the water level. Durante said, "I was flying so low that my altimeter was registering fathoms."

The most preposterous, outlandish stories would be conceived to relate low-flying escapades.

Scoots Muir exaggerated, "I was flying so low over the Annapolis Valley that my air-gunner made \$10 picking apples on the way."

"That's nothing," said MacEachern, "we were so low that a crawling snake said to us, 'Scram! This is my territory'."

Not to be outdone, McDonald piped up, "When I get over to the European theatre of war, I'll evade enemy fighters by hiding behind waves in the Channel."

Our work continued ; if the morning was the flying period, then the afternoon would be devoted to ground school work and conversely. At this operational training unit a pilot got about 65 hours day work, dual

inclusive, and about 20 hours of night flying. The night cross-country trips were very interesting and the upper atmosphere so smooth. Two trips were done to see a pilot's reaction to night-day flying. You would take off in the late hours of the afternoon, just before twilight, and return in the pitch-black of night. On the other trip you would take off in the early morning hours and return after dawn. To see dawn approaching from a height of 5,000 feet was a magnificent sight. In the murky atmosphere Mother Earth was forgotten, then the dawn would usher in the reality of the globe with an irradiance of splendour. The emission of rays of light was indeed a sight to behold.

Another flying exercise was one that entailed taking off with a war load. The aircraft, with this additional weight, reacted a bit more sluggishly, and the climb to 10,000 feet was slower. Also with a war load, formation flying was attempted, as in actual warfare.

All different phases of flying were executed in the remaining weeks of our courses. Our ground school examinations had been written and all had gotten through most satisfactorily, so now the entire course was awaiting posting orders. In this intervening period we had plenty of free time for conversation of the sedentary type and for companionship. We formed a little group of Pinky O'Neil, Cyril Sawyer, nicknamed Tom for obvious reasons, Bud MacEachern, Johnny Cline and a Torontonian named Emsig. It eventually evolved that Cline, Emsig, MacEachern and myself, along with our crews, were chosen for the same Boston squadron overseas, so we called ourselves "The Four Horsemen of the Airwaves."

Well, orders came through . . . we were to proceed on embarkation leave, then travel to Lachine, Quebec, for final instructions before grabbing the Empress of Scotland for the shores of the Clyde in Scotland.

On my leave I had a wonderful time; people are so generous with their time and compliments when they don't expect to see you any more. Everyone wants to invite you for dinner, you receive a few gifts that they expect you to use in the next world, there are a few tears. My church friends followed this sentimental trend; I love these good, friendly people of St. Gerard's. I didn't realise I had so many friends in the parish, but then you usually forget those people who have watched you mature from infancy. In a small town they are more familiar with your successes and tribulations than you are.

I go on to say the parishioners made a few speeches of good will, said I was such a good boy, and so on. They gave the aforementioned gifts to me, and Father Shalla presented me with a rosary and firmly told me that I seek solace, intervention and constancy of religion in the Blessed Virgin. If I venerated Mary, she would intercede for me, he said, and I would unquestionably come back to them, intact in limb and spirit.

"Thank you, Father," I said, "and you good, kind people of St. Gerard's. With such generosity shown me, I feel awkward and about as out of place as Al Smith did on one occasion in New York State . . . this story was told to me when I was in the fabulous Wonder City. Al, who is the president of that New York colossus, the Empire State building, was asked to

address the inmates of Sing Sing prison. Al blustered forth, "My friends," and this drew a laugh. Smith reddened and changed it to, "Fellow convicts." The inmates guffawed, and Al was as red as a beet by this time, but he regained his composure to say, "You know what I mean, I'm glad to see so many of you here." Well, the hall caved in with laughter after that. I'm in somewhat the same position of uncertainty, but I am glad to see so many of you here. In my mind, I'll have to go up and down the pews of the church to remember your names, but you same parishioners are always responding to sincere causes and benefactions. Your benevolent spirit is indeed splendid. To Mrs. Walsh, the mother of the first boy from this parish killed in the war for so heroic a cause, I say I will avenge his death by the Nazi horde, my battle eye will be sharpened, my body re-incarnated with strength. Thank you for your generosity of this evening, and I shall embark with a faith to punish the pogromatically mad Nazi."

I have told you the story of Pennfield Ridge

THE END

